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The Witness of Art

or

The Legend of Beauty

Wyke Bayliss

Dear Miss Brown.
With love and best wishes
from L. P.—
April 24th/79.

THE WITNESS OF ART.

THE WITNESS OF ART

OR

THE LEGEND OF BEAUTY.

BY

WYKE BAYLISS,

FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON, AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS.

"MERRY OR SAD SHALL'T BE? AS MERRY AS YOU WILL."

London:
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
MDCCCLXXVI.

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TO THE YOUNG PAINTERS WHO, BY

PATIENT LABOUR, FIDELITY TO NATURE

OR THE SPLENDOUR OF GENIUS, HAVE

MADE ART A GLORY IN OUR LAND, THIS

VOLUME IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON, 1876.

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THE LEGEND OF BEAUTY.

/ c

I.

THE KING'S MESSENGER.

I SHOULD like to say at once that the simile is not to be pressed too far. What simile indeed is there that will bear, as logicians phrase it, "to go on all-fours"? We could scarcely expect the poor Beast himself to do that, at least not in the presence of Beauty. It is sufficient for my purpose that in its simple outline the story of "Beauty and the Beast" is the story that I have to tell; the story of one who, although the son of a king, and dwelling in a palace of more than regal splendour, yet lies there prone and debased, the only graceless thing amidst all manifestations of loveliness, until a form of infinite beauty stands before him, bends over him, stoops as Diana stooped to kiss Endymion, and with a touch awakens him to life and to the rich inheritance of his birthright. This is the story of "Beauty and the Beast." This is the story of the King's Messenger. This is the story of the influence of Poetry and Art upon our lives.

Now the word "Beast" is an ugly word, and I do not intend to fling it at any man's head, any more than I would accept it myself. But thinking of the many faces that may bend over these pages, faces radiant with intelligence and culture, I dare to ask, is it not true that for us there might have been—that for many of our race there still is—a darkness as black and terrible as was that of the king's son in the legend? That just as it was with the Beast, who would have remained a Beast for ever had not Beauty stooped down and kissed him, so it has been with us—a presence has stood before us, has bent over us; and lifting our eyes to her face we have seen that she is none other than the King's Messenger?

And here let me say that there shall be no mystery as to my meaning, nor doubt as to my purpose. My meaning is that the Ethics of Æsthetics are Divine; that Art is not a plaything, but an influence upon our lives, real and distinct; and my purpose is to show that this influence is altogether for our good.

I know, indeed, that the King has many messengers, and, in speaking of Beauty as the King's Messenger, I do not forget those other who have told us of Virtue or of Truth. Have we not all of us found that we are surrounded by influences, not of good only, but of evil also; and that we have to choose between them; and having chosen, to make a bold stand for that which is

right, on the faith of the Divine Precepts being messages from the great King? Have we not also found that knowledge is not ours by inheritance? It comes to us in the form of message after message, which we must learn patiently and master thoroughly. These messages we may call Science or Philosophy, but they also come from the same King, and we must again choose between obedience and a bright intelligence, or neglect with a darkened mind.

So there are other messengers, as Beauty had other sisters; and if I do not speak of them it is because they do not come within my subject, and not that they are lightly esteemed by me. To say that Art is a great and living influence for good is not to exalt it above Science or Theology. It is enough for me to deliver the one message with which I am charged, the Message of Art, believing it to be from the King, to His children, and about the Beautiful.

And not only are there many messengers, but each messenger has many things to tell us; in other words, Beauty comes to us in many different forms. Homer was blind, so Beauty must have stood beside him and whispered in his ear; but now, after three thousand years, her whispers have not ceased to echo through the world. Phidias must have seen her face to face, and until marble crumbles into dust we shall know something of the vision he beheld. Her footsteps

were with Dante on his weary journey across the Apennines; or, when a stranger in his own country, he came upon a quiet cloister, and the monks questioning him what he wished and whom he sought, he, looking at them with sad eyes, answered "Peace." Was she not also with Chaucer, as day by day he watched the building of St. George's Chapel? Was she not with Shakespeare, as he paced the narrow streets of the city or wandered by the River Avon? There are lilies by every river's side. There is poetry in every phase of life. And what the lilies and the other flowers are to the margin of a stream, such should Poetry and Art be to the river of our lives:—

O flower-de-luce, bloom on, and let the river
Linger to kiss thy feet!
O flower of song, bloom on, and make for ever
The world more fair and sweet.

It is true that I have named only the great masters of song, and that some of us may say "We do not care to climb Olympus with Homer, or to take Paradise by storm with Dante. The tide of our life is so swift and strong. We give our strength to the stern duties of the day, and then we are tired, and a little rest is to us more precious than the grandeur of Milton or the pathos of Shakespeare."

Then would I plead that not by the great rivers only do the lilies grow, but by every tiny stream that makes

the sweet meadows fertile. And it is thus with Poetry and Art. The King's Messenger does, indeed, appear sometimes in storm and tempest, or clothed with a splendour too dazzling for our eyes to look upon; but not seldom does she approach with accents gentle as the breath of a summer evening, with garments fresh from the dews of heaven:—

> Sitting on a bank,
> Weeping against the king my father's wreck,
> This music crept by me upon the waters,
> Allaying both their fury and my passion
> With its sweet air.

It will be seen that I am speaking of Art as of a language, living and known to all men. But the language of Art is not simply a dialect through which we transmit to each other our own thoughts. It is the one universal tongue which has never been confounded. From country to country, from age to age, its voice is still heard, and its words are understood. And even this does not express all its glory. It is much more than this. It is the *logos* through which the silence of Nature speaks to us. It is to us the translation—the interpretation—of a message. Is there a splendour in the sky? Then Turner and Claude have seen it, and their pictures cry "Behold!" Is there on the bleak side of an Alpine mountain a crevasse where, sheltered from the eternal snows, some flower has blossomed

into life? Then the solitary monk whose cell is near has watched it with loving eyes, and on the margin of an illuminated Gospel the fragile flower shall live for ever and be perhaps an emblem of the love of Christ. Is there a great deed done of love, or heroism, or noble endurance? Then Raphael, with a magic all unknown to the historian, shall picture it for us. Is there the dear face of some one lost to us, that we would give the world to see once more, but may not? Then in Art we may look upon it, if our eyes are not blinded for the time with tears.

It is thus that Art speaks to us. It is thus that we must learn to read its language if we would understand its message—unless, indeed, we are content to go through life as moles burrow under ground, or conscious of beauty only as the bat may be, which, loving darkness, dares to fly in the sweet daylight and comes headlong on a statue of Apollo.

If you stand before a lion's cage you will see this difference between the lion and all other beasts, wild or tame:—The tiger will beat furiously at his prison bars; the bear will pace backwards and forwards, as if for ever measuring the narrow bounds that hem him in; the panther will cover you with his glance, chafing only that an iron grating is between; the gazelle will gaze at you with soft, large, wondering eyes. Only the lion will not look at you at all. To him you are no more

than the bars between the window panes are to us when we look out anxiously for a friend's coming, or for the rain to cease and the rift of light to break through the clouds. He looks past you; his eyes are always on the same spot—the little bit of blue sky that he can see just in the corner of his cage.

It is this looking through and beyond that makes the lion the type of majesty.

But then the brute is born a brute, with instincts savage, or gentle, or noble; while we are born children, and have to acquire our knowledge by patient study and careful culture. And Art is one of the highest means of culture we possess—it is the King's message to us about the Beautiful.

And the message is not to some of us, but to all. If we reject it, we reject it at our peril. If Knowledge is only for the Philosopher, and Virtue only for the Divine, then Art may be only for the Artist. But Art is not for the Artist only, any more than gold is for the miner, or pearls for the pearl-fisher. Raphael lived only thirty-seven years, yet his works have educated many generations and are still a glory in the world. No, Art is not for the Artist only, but for us all; to refine us, to ennoble us, to raise us from baser pleasures, to fill our eyes with beauty and our hearts with gladness, to show us that we are not beasts but the King's Children, and that Beauty is His Messenger.

most precious works of the masters, a *vierge noire*, a doll such as the one I have described, the ugly black one, but crowned with gold, and robed in jewelled vestments worth a king's ransom. You may see pilgrims, weary and footsore, from all parts of Europe, pressing to its shrine. And mark, it is not before the Madonna of Raphael that the pilgrims kneel. As with the child, so with them; it is to the black doll that they pour out the passion of their hearts.

So the vision of the Beautiful is not necessarily to the innocent eyes of childhood, nor to the keen gaze of after years. We must look elsewhere than to our untaught instincts of liking and disliking for any real standard. Children, and men, and nations have to learn it; have to learn it slowly and patiently. How many years did it take the people of England to discover that the "willow pattern" was not all that could be desired for dinner plates? How many centuries will it take to teach the Chinese that God knew best what shape to make a woman's foot? Dear child, the time shall come for thy blue eyes to see the King's Messenger. Weary pilgrim, the time may come for thee to see the King Himself.

But not at the first visit of Beauty does the transformation take place. "Tell me, Beauty," said the Beast, "do you not think me very ugly?" And Beauty, who could not tell a lie, replied sadly, "Yes! dear

Beast; but then," she added, "but then, you are so very good."

The poor Beast only sighed. "You are so very kind," said Beauty, earnestly, "that I almost forgot you were so ugly."

But when it came to the next question, "Beauty, will you marry me?" she answered in a very firm voice, "No, dear Beast."

And yet we know that she did marry him after all. But that is the sequel, and must not be anticipated.

We close the book, and look back through the long vista of the centuries, and what do we see? We see a people sunk in a black darkness like that which still reigns where the sweet light of Christianity is not known. We see them with outstretched arms in the darkness, as if trying to touch but the hem of His garment who sitteth upon the throne. First make your gods;—this they proceed to do. Two pillars of stone, placed side by side, stand very well for Castor and Pollux, and a bar or slab laid across from one to the other suffices to express their mutual affection.

First make your gods;—ah, not so! That is the finishing stroke. The classic ritual began by the worship of just those things that could not be made—the sun, and moon, and stars. Then came the making of emblems; then hero-worship, and the ascription to the

gods of all the passions of our sinful natures. This is the history of the Pantheon: this is the history of Classic Art.

Two blocks of stone were all very well for Castor and Pollux, and Homer may have been content to worship them thus: but when he began to sing about their sister Helen it was a very different matter; he found that he must give to her all the supreme loveliness of real womanhood—only a real woman could do so much mischief as she did. Poets and Architects and Sculptors; we see the long procession for a thousand years, from Homer to Virgil, until the land is full of temples, and the temples are full of gods. And such temples! The Doric—strong as the youthful Hippomenes ready for the race. The Ionic — graceful as Atalanta as she stoops to gather the apples. The Corinthian—imperial as the Cyprian queen bringing the golden fruit from the Hesperides. And such gods! — not like the thing we have seen at Chartres — but differentiated from us only through the excess of splendour. These men knew, it may be dimly, but they knew that there is a King, and that Beauty is His Messenger. In other words, this was the first visit of Beauty to the Beast.

And Beauty, who had the tenderest heart in the world, felt her fear of the Beast gradually vanish. She ate her supper with a good appetite, and conversed in

her own sensible and charming way; till at last he terrified her more than ever by saying abruptly in his gruff voice, "Beauty, will you marry me?"

And still, frightened as she was, Beauty would only speak the truth, so she stedfastly answered, "No;" adding, however, "I shall always be your friend, so try and let that content you."

And again, the legend says, "the poor Beast only sighed."

And well he might, for her dear visit was fast drawing to its close.

Again I lay down the book, again I see the long procession, but this time passing into darkness. The poet Virgil was the last to hear the sweeping of her garments as Beauty passed away; the sculptors of the Laocöon the last to see the splendour of her face. Then came a thousand years of darkness to the painter, and of silence to the poet, with nothing seen but blood, with nothing heard but the rush of armed feet that would tread down the new message, the message more divine, the message of love.

The story may be told in few words. Augustus, for whom Virgil wrote, and Vespasian, for whom the sculptors wrought, have passed away with the mighty empire of Rome. Ten times the Christians have been persecuted with cruel torments indescribable. War

after war has deluged the world with blood; and yet, steadily, with a power irresistible because divine, Christianity is marching to its triumph, like Christ upon the waters, storm and tempest before, peace where its steps have been. In the fourth century, Constantine, the first Christian king, sits upon the throne. Another century and France becomes Christian under Clovis. Another, and our dear country is visited by Augustine. Another, and the Saracens have taken possession of Jerusalem, and Mahomet has given a new evil to the world. And thus events crowd thick and fast upon each other; the devastation of Europe by the Goths, the loss of the Latin language as a living tongue, the conquests of Charlemagne, the establishment of the monarchy of Russia, the conquest of England by the Normans.

Looking back upon all this we do not wonder that there was no place for Art; that while men were cutting each other's throats they were thinking but little of the divine beauty of the human form; that while men were defying every law of the great King Himself they had but little reverence for the King's Messenger.

So we see nothing of Beauty all this time. I suppose she had gone back to her sisters.

But on the tenth night, says the legend, on the tenth night of her absence, Beauty dreamed that she

was in the garden of the Palace, and that the Beast lay dying.

It is said that truth is often stranger than fiction, but here the truth seems so strange, and the legend is so true, that for a moment the difficulty is to disentangle them.

On the tenth night of her absence, says the legend, Beauty dreamed that the Beast lay dying. After the ten dark and silent centuries Poetry and Art were indeed very nearly dead.

Then came the painters of the early Italian school, Margaritone, Cimabue, Giotto, Massacio, and a few others. When we see their frescos, half-effaced perhaps by time, of the saints with golden glory round their heads, more curious than beautiful, let us remember that these men lived nearly as long before Raphael's time as we live after him. They had no great school from which to learn. The buried statues of Greece and Rome, with their serene beauty, had not been discovered. The wonderful pictures of Angelo and Raphael, Titian, Correggio, and Da Vinci had not been painted. They stood alone, with nothing to consecrate the past, nothing to make the future glorious, except the great, loving, living aspirations of their own hearts. But the great flame of such love as theirs cannot be quenched. They were architects, and built churches; they were sculptors, and

adorned them with statues; they were painters, and covered the walls with legends of the saints, quaint figures wrought upon a golden ground, half-picture and half-symbol.

But the solemn minster, the grave statue, the sweet pictures, were but the shadow of Beauty as she returned once more. The night has ended; she has left the dark forest and the howling wolves behind; she has reached the gate; she has passed up the long avenue; the doors roll back, she enters, and behold! the Palace of the Beast has become the Temple of Christian Art.

II.

THE MESSAGE.

SO, for the second time we have seen the King's Messenger. So, the Message about the Beautiful has been twice interpreted to us.

First by the Greek—who claims to interpret it in the statues of the gods—and not of the gods only but in every splendour of beauty that the human form can take; then by the Mediævalist—in the pictures of the saints and the expression of the passionate love of the religion of Christ.

The points in which these interpretations agree and in which they differ are worthy of our most earnest consideration.

They agree in this—that they take the human form as the exponent of what they have to express; they differ in that through the human form they express sentiments wide as the poles asunder. Classic Art tells us everything that can be told of strength and grace and beauty; but of the life itself, of which these

are but the manifestation, it tells us nothing. Sorrow is an evil thing; why should it find perpetual remembrance in Art? Pain will touch our bodies, be they never so fair; but we need not mar our statues with its cruel touch. We seek the beautiful, and suffering is not beautiful; so, though its anguish may crush our lives, yet in Art at least we can cast it from our sight. And thus sorrow and pain and suffering were excluded from Classic Art; but at what a cost! There can be no compassion without sorrow, no deep sympathy without suffering, no heroic endurance without pain; so that in losing these things Art lost also the expression of all the tenderest and noblest emotions of which our natures are capable.

But that was Mount Olympus, where the gods reigned; a mount covered with pleasant woods, and caves, and grottos; on its top was neither wind, nor rain, nor cloud, but an eternal spring. While the face of the Mediævalist was set towards another Mount, where One suffered, and from whence the Message came to him. It was as though the Greek had seen the Messenger, but amidst the laughter of the gods heard not the Message. It was as though the Mediævalist had received the Message, but in the darkness of Calvary had failed to see the divine beauty of the Messenger.

I know that in dealing with such a subject as this it is impossible to prove my position step by step. It is

said of a great mathematician that having read Milton's "Paradise Lost" he laid down the book with the question "What does it prove?" Yet even in the study of the exact sciences there are occasions when it is necessary to suggest a train of thought, hereafter to be verified by careful research and analysis, rather than to dictate or define. And it is my purpose to be tentative rather than dictatorial, to suggest rather than to dogmatise. There may be some to whom I am showing things they have not seen before. I do not ask them to see with my eyes. It is enough for me to have the happiness of leading them to look at these things, and to recognise that there is beauty in them. Others there may be who will read these pages, who are themselves masters of the subject, before whose eyes are always the creations of the Poet and the Artist. I do not ask them to limit their vision to mine. It is sufficient for me if even for a moment I can place the favourite picture or statue in a new light, or give to the poet's rhythm a cadence forgotten or overlooked.

The subject is so old; reaching back through the long centuries. The subject is so wide; stretching over so many countries. For though I have referred to two periods only, they are types of great movements in the world of Art; though I have named two schools only, they are types of the efforts made by many nations to realise in some tangible form the glory of the beauty of

the creation. In the Palace of the Beast were many chambers, and it is said that Beauty ran from room to room seeking for him for whose dear sake she had returned.

What were these rooms like? If we could only enter them with her! See! in her haste the doors are left open, and we can pass in unobserved.

We find ourselves in a large amphitheatre of beautiful proportions. It is in the form of a half-circle, round which are ranged galleries, with many seats, which are fast being filled. Before us is a stage, but the players have not yet entered, so we look round. Of course, being a Greek theatre, there is no roof above us; and as the day is sultry some of the ladies have light sunshades. A few of the company, however, cast anxious glances towards the darkening horizon, and many are prepared with ample cloaks.

And now there is a hush; and a silvery flute is heard, as the chorus enter, fifteen in number, beautiful women all of them, presently to form a living background to the chief actors, but now moving with measured steps towards where is seen a youth stretched upon a couch.

The youth is Orestes; and at his feet, her face wrapped in her mantle, is Electra. The chorus approach and question Electra about Orestes wonderingly; and she with sad gesture entreats their silence, lest he die if they awake him from his momentary sleep. Then

the terrible story falls from her lips. Orestes, to avenge the murder of his father, has slain his mother; and for this he is struck with madness, wasting away with a grievous malady, pursued by the Furies, his mother's blood whirling him to frenzy. And now the day has come for him to be judged, either to be stoned or to die by the sword. As for herself, alone, desolate, friendless, she also will perish with him, for what is life to her but bitter wailings and nightly tears?

And while she is yet speaking we hear the chorus, "O Virgin Electra, look that thy Brother is not already dead."

But Orestes is not dead, and after a momentary respite he cries,—

" Raise me !
" Raise me ! Strike from my lips the foam,
" From my eyes the blinding mist."

And she, taking him in her beautiful arms,—

" Brother, the task is sweet, a sister's hand
" Shall not refuse the ministry of love."

" Lie close to me ! lie close to me, lift from my eyes
" The hair that blinds me."

" O dear sordid tresses ! "

" Now lay me down again, for I am weak
" In the short respite that the Furies give me.
" O Mother ! I implore thee, urge them not,
" Urge not those Furies on me, horrid with snakes
" Blood-gazing."

" Be still, my Brother,
" They are the creatures only of thy fancy."

" Ah ! but these dogs, these goddesses will kill me,
" These gorgon-visaged ministers of hell."

" Brother, my arms are round thee !
" I will not let thee go ! "

" Loose me ! Loose me !
" Thou art a Fury, and wouldst hurl me down
" To Tartarus. Give me my bow,
" With which Apollo said
" I should repel the fiends if they appalled me ;
" Why tarry ye yet? Hear ye not, nor see
" The wingèd shafts—whither—the wingèd shafts ?
" Why tarry ye yet ? But see, the waves are still !
" Sister, why weepest thou ? "

But Electra's tears are soon dried in action. Pylades, the friend of Orestes, and betrothed to Electra in happier times, agrees with her on a scheme of revenge. Helen is within the house ; her daughter, the beautiful girl Hermione, is gone with votive offerings and oblations to the grave. Orestes and Pylades will slay Helen while Electra with the chorus of women keep watch for the return of Hermione.

So the house is surrounded by these women, their long tresses floating in the dark air, and Electra charges them, and they do Electra's bidding.

" We will guard the west."
" And we towards where the sun flings his first ray."
" We are as thou commandest." " Who is this coming ? "
" Fear not, for all is still ! "

" And I will listen at the door, will listen.
" Why tarry ye so long, so long within,
" To sacrifice, to sacrifice the victim?
" Ah! they hear not;
" Are their swords struck, their swords struck from their hands,
" Dumb at her beauty?"

Then is heard from within a sudden and sharp cry.

" Heard ye! It is the shriek, the shriek of Helen!
" Kill—slay—strike with both hands, with the two-edged sword!"

" Be still! I heard a footstep on the path!"

And Electra turns with placid face to meet Hermione.

" O virgin, art thou come
" From Clytemnestra's grave?"

And following swiftly upon this comes the storming of the palace, the torchlight and the burning, the sword of Orestes gleaming at the white bosom of Hermione, Menelaus crying,—

" Give back the body of my wife!"

and Orestes,—

" Ask her of the gods:
" But I will slay your daughter!"

Now while all this has been going on—while this tempest of evil passions has been gathering thick and fast—another tempest has been gathering also. The theatre is almost dark; large drops of rain are heard

pattering on the sunshades of the ladies, and almost before the more fortunate of the company can wrap themselves in their mantles a storm of rain descends, and the audience is dispersed with the rolling of the thunder instead of the silvery music of the flute.

So we do not see the end of the play. But that is no great loss; for if Euripides could devise no better sequel than the descent of Apollo, and a general shaking of hands and marrying all round, he might have blessed the rain for covering the weakness of his plot.

But now, apart from its value as a model of elegant Greek, what trace is there in this play of the presence of Beauty? Of the Beast there is enough, indeed, and to spare. It may be fairly described as a phantasmagoria of evil, deed after deed of cruel revenge, cowardice, treachery, murder; it is one pitiless record of guilt, disaster on disaster, crime upon crime.

I have seen, in happy homes where there are children, a darkened room divided by a great sheet or transparent screen, behind which is placed a lamp; and I have heard the sweet chorus of the children's voices as friends, passing before the lamp, have cast their shadows on the screen in many a grotesque proportion. But now and then a shadow will pass, perhaps of some dear face forgetful of disguise, and tiny hands are clapped in loving glee to see and recognise the beautiful profile of sister or mother.

Many of these Greek Dramas remind me of such a scene. There is the grotesque shadow of that dread procession of evil. It is the shadow of the Beast. But there is the shadow of Beauty also. We see, not indeed the divine precept of charity—that, the Master alone could manifest—but we see that there is a righteous limit to revenge. We see the infinite misery that follows crime. We see the sacrificing love of a sister; the enduring love of a friend; the god-protected safety of innocence. And all this is presented to us in every splendour of grace or might that the human form can take:—in the chorus of women, in the young men Orestes and Pylades, in the sweet girl Hermione, in the aged Tyndarus, in the veteran Menelaus, in the tragedy-queen Electra, in the beautiful Helen.

And like a shadow it fades from before us. We look back for an instant at the theatre. It is silent and deserted.

> We see its broken arch, its ruined wall,
> Its chambers desolate;
> Only the eternal wind makes music there.

We look back but for an instant, and then, remembering that we are in the Palace of the Beast, we lift our eyes to follow Beauty as she passes to another room.

A stately room, crowded with people, some playing, some drinking, and others fighting with various weapons.

These are the gods; not Jove and Apollo and Mars, but Odin and Thor and Baldur, and the rest of the company of twelve to whom divine honour was rendered by the hardy races of the North.

The first of these is Odin; the other gods are his children. We are within the Valhalla, that is, Odin's residence, where he receives and rewards all such as die sword in hand. Here he distributes to them praises and delights; here he feasts them with perpetual plenty.

Just now Odin is at home with his wife Frigga, and his children are on a visit to the parental roof. There is Thor, their first-born, with his belt and gauntlets, and, above all, his hammer, with which he did such marvellous exploits in the land of the Giants. And there is the second son of Odin, the beautiful Baldur, so dazzling in his splendour that our eyes are blinded only to look on him. Of all the gods Baldur is the wisest, the most eloquent, and yet the gentlest. He is the Adonis of the Greek, the Sweet Singer of the Indian: beloved of gods and men.

But even the massive walls of the Valhalla cannot shut out that accursed thing we call evil. And evil has entered with the cruel rumour of the impending death of Baldur.

Therefore the gods have assembled, and conjured all things to avert from him the threatened danger; and Frigga has exacted an oath from fire and water, iron,

and all metals, stones, earths, diseases, birds, beasts, poisons, and all creeping things, that none of them shall do any hurt to Baldur.

And thus it has become a favourite pastime with the gods for the beautiful Baldur to stand in their midst as a mark for them to aim at. See him as he stands there; his long hair whiter than the whitest lily of Sweden, his sweet face radiant with a splendour bright as the sun. See, the darts and stones hurled at him thick and fast! See, battle-axe and sword descending on him, even the great hammer of Thor! Yet he stands unharmed, joyous and laughing with a music all his own. And all this is to the honour of Baldur. There is not a god amongst the company who does not join in the sport—except the blind old Hœdur, who cannot see to strike.

And Frigga, is she not happy in the success of her innocent device!

But the best-laid schemes of mice and men—yes, and of the gods too, if these are gods—will fail sometimes. "What," said the Evil One, "have all things sworn to spare Baldur?" "All things," answered Frigga, "except one little shrub, too young and feeble to crave an oath from; it is called the mistletoe."

In an instant the Evil One is gone. He gathers the mistletoe and returns. Going quietly to Hœdur, who is standing apart, "Why dost not thou also throw

something at Baldur?" "Because I am blind," said Hœdur, "and see not where Baldur is; and what have I to throw?"

"Come, then, and do like the rest. I will direct thy arm as thou throwest this twig."

And the arm of Hœdur is raised, the mistletoe is taken, it is thrown, and Baldur, pierced through and through, falls lifeless.

Never was witnessed amongst gods or men a deed so atrocious as this.

I heard a voice that cried,
"Balder the Beautiful
"Is dead, is dead!"
And through the misty air
Passed like the mournful cry
Of sunward sailing cranes.

For what is Baldur?—but the summer sun, struck by the cruel winter of the North.

I saw the pallid corpse
Of the dead sun
Borne through the Northern sky.
Blasts from Niffelheim
Lifted the sheeted mists
Around him as he passed.

And the voice for ever cried,
"Balder the Beautiful
"Is dead, is dead!"
And died away
Through the dreary night,
In accents of despair.

There is a splendour in the clear starlight of a Northern

sky ; there is a glory in the silver and crimson flushings of the Aurora; but not like the splendour of his eyes, not like the glory of his tresses.

Balder the Beautiful,
God of the summer sun,
Fairest of all the Gods !
Light from his forehead beamed,
Runes were upon his tongue
As on the warrior's sword.

Hœder, the blind old God,
Whose feet are shod with silence,
Pierced through that gentle breast ;—

Then the long Northern twilight, the sweet sun sinking, floating, crimsoning, across the dark sea; cloud upon cloud—have we not seen it?—cloud upon cloud, piled up in grim fantastic shapes. It is a glorious sunset; streams of fiery splendour reaching to the zenith. But is it a sunset ? Or not rather the funeral car of Baldur ? Are they clouds ? Or not rather Odin and Thor and the other gods, as in mystic procession they bear him to his burning ship. I see them all—that shadowy form is the chariot of Frigga drawn by her ravens—that fringe of light is the white god Heimdal—that slow moving mass is the favourite horse of Baldur—that pale crescent bending over him is the dear wife. But see ! the car, descending, touches the wave.

They laid him in his ship,
With horse and harness,

They launched the burning ship!
It floated far away
Over the misty sea,
Till like the sun it seemed,
Sinking beneath the waves.
Balder returned no more!

So perish the old gods!
But out of the sea of Time
Rises a new land of song,
Fairer than the old.
Over its meadows green
Walk the young bards and sing.

And as Beauty passes on to meet them, surely it is her sweet voice that cries,—

Build it again,
O ye bards,
Fairer than before!
Sing the new song of love!

The law of force is dead!
The law of love prevails!
Thor, the thunderer,
Shall rule the earth no more,
No more, with threats,
Challenge the meek Christ.

We cannot go through all the chambers of the Palace of the Beast, but there were none which Beauty did not enter, there are none but bear some record of her presence. Records not all the same, but differing as the eyes that looked upon her differ, manifold as the

voices that sang her praise. The Greek met her and said "It is Helen." The Icelander, wrapped in his furs, saw her footsteps on the horizon, and said "It is Baldur." Dante followed her through rivers of blood, through cataracts of fire, through storm and tempest,

> Eternal, maledict, and cold and heavy,

through the dread circles of the abyss, where the darkness becomes the blackness of despair. And finding her not, he climbed the steep ascent and dared to enter Paradise; through sounds more sweet, through circles more effulgent, even to the river of light:

> Till with amazement filled, and jubilant,
> He hears at last the angelic saraband:
> "O splendour of the living light eternal!
> "O turn thy holy eyes unto thy faithful one!"

eyes that flashed lightnings on him so that he could not look—but when he did stedfastly behold them, lo! they were the eyes of Beatrice.

These are but a few only of the manifestations of the Beautiful. Think for a moment of any of those marvellous creations of Art—the churches of Rheims, or Canterbury, or Chartres; the deep portals, the crowd of statues canopied with quaint sculptures until "the minster seems a cross of flowers," the dragons and gargoyles taunting the ever-patient Christ under whose

outstretched arms the birds find shelter and build their nests. Then look up and you shall see the windows crimson with the blood of the martyrs—golden with the glory of the crowns that are yet to be; and the great Rose — like another sunset — painted, not with the weird forms of Odin and Thor and Baldur, but with the passion of Christ. If the Greek sculptors saw the divine splendour of her face—if Virgil heard the sweeping of her garments as she passed away, surely the cathedral builders—the poets in stone—were the first to meet her as she returned. I said it doubtfully at first, but now with the certainty that it is true. The solemn minster, the quaint statue, the sweet pictures of the Mediævalist were but the shadow of Beauty as she visited us once more. The night has ended; she has left the dark forest and the howling wolves behind; she has reached the gate; she has passed up the long avenue; the doors roll back, she enters, and behold! the Palace of the Beast has become the Temple of Christian Art.

I do not care to draw out the simile any further. I might, indeed, compare those other Messengers that tell of Science and Theology to the elder sisters of Beauty, and suggest that if they refuse their sympathy to Art, and fail to recognise their kinship with the younger sister, it will be at the peril of sharing the elder sisters' fate, who we know were turned into

statues. I cannot but remember that after all it was not in any room of the Palace that Beauty discovered the Beast, but on the grass-plot; and that so with Art, the only hope of the Modern School is in this, that it has found a new life, not in the traditions of the studio, but in the study of Nature, out-of-doors, in the fields, under the blue sky.

But I do not wish to elaborate the theme curiously; I would rather express in a few simple but very earnest words two thoughts that grow out of the subject.

And first as to the Messenger—as to this essence which we call Beauty. The Greek has seen it; the Mediævalist has seen it; Poet and Sculptor, Architect and Painter have enshrined it in their works; and yet it is still the "Holy Grail," the one quest of Art.

Let us seek it also. If we call ourselves philosophers, and believe that we "growed" like Topsy, let us seek it; it means the fruition of our manhood, the blossom and fruit, of which we are the germ. If we call ourselves Christians, let us seek it; it means part of our Faith, even the redemption of the body.

And then as to the Message. I would be very bold and say that it is everywhere and always for our good. He that is not better for looking on the splendour of the creation would not be better for looking upon the face of the Creator, he would only shrink blasted from His presence by the excess of light. Is there evil in

the world? Then the Message of Art is always and everywhere a protest against it. Against the raging fire of sensualism and the dead ashes of materialism alike, Greek Art gave witness in the passionless splendour of ideal beauty. Against the brutish law of force every gentle legend of the North was like a soft hand uplifted, weak it may be physically as the gentle hand of a woman, but with another kind of strength mightier than the hammer of Thor. Was there an evil in the cruel and stern dogmatism of the Mediæval Church? Then every sweet picture of the Holy Child or the Virgin Mother was a message to stay the fire and sword and the rack of the Inquisition. And yet once more. Is there an evil still existing in the hard, grinding, pitiless, competition of our own times? Then Poetry and Art still give perpetual witness against it; in every delicate rendering of Nature by the painter looking upon which we can cry "How beautiful!" in every refined thought of the poet dwelling upon which we can lift ourselves even for a moment from the dust.

It was a saying of Goethe that every man should, every day, see at least one fine work of Art, hear one sweet strain of music, read one beautiful poem. But if the poet and painter are thus to colour all our lives, let them never forget that the Message of Art must always be about the Beautiful. I know indeed that if it is to take Man for its theme, it must take him with

all the passions of his life, both good and evil. But the good and evil must not stand side by side as co-ordinates. If Art is to be the King's Messenger it must show the mastery of evil—the ultimate triumph of the right. It must rise—

> In ever-highering eagle-circles up
> To the great sun of glory, and thence swoop
> Down upon all things base, and dash them dead.

"No, dear Beast," cried Beauty, passionately, "you shall not die, but live. I thought it was only friendship, but now I know that it was love."

This was the Message.

She covered her eyes and cried for joy; when she looked up the Beast was gone.

He had become the King's son.

THE WITNESS OF ART.

I.

THE ANTIQUE.

THERE is perhaps no sentiment more real amongst lovers of Art than that of reverence for the great masters of the Classic and Mediæval schools. Nor is this reverence to be deprecated. Without a reverential spirit nothing great can be accomplished; but let us see that we revere intelligently. If Polycletus was greater than Michael Angelo in ideality, Michael Angelo was greater than Polycletus in fervour; but this implies that an excellence is conceivable that should surpass both.

There is again no feeling more strong amongst thoughtful men, than that if pure religion demands some sacrifice in Art, the sacrifice must be made. And this is no doubt true; but it does not follow that the sacrifice is demanded; let us see that we do not charge our Faith with folly. How common, for example, is the idea that Church music suffered at the Reformation. Such a proposition, however,

supreme in the studio. It is a great thing to look back and revere and learn; but not thus did the great masters gain their inspiration. It is a greater thing to look forward; and this should be the attitude of the modern school. Great as was Greek Art in its eclecticism, and Mediæval Art in devotional fervour, the difference between their excellence and that of the modern schools is a difference of kind rather than degree; and in the broad, human sympathies of the religion with which it is allied, Modern Art has everything to hope for, and nothing to fear.

As the theme of Religion is virtue, and of Science truth, so the theme of Art is beauty. But the artist has no more inherent perception of his subject than has the theologian or the philosopher. It is true that we have but to lift our eyes to see that there is beauty in the world; the skies, the rivers, the forests, the great sea, the pale moonlight, the sunsets of gold and purple —these things, which sin not nor suffer, have indeed a divine splendour that evil passions waste not nor destroy. But there is abroad in the world that also which is common, and debased, and ugly; and not by any fine instinct of our nature can we discern the beautiful. Our ancestors dyed their teeth black, and their skins yellow: was that a fine instinct of their nature? To-day an African lady is judged like an

English ox, by weight: is that a fine instinct of nature? We know not what is beautiful any more than we know what is good or true. It is the province of Art to discover this to us. The realisation of the beautiful is the true aim of Art. As the Evangelist sets before him the pattern of the divine goodness, and translates it in his generous efforts for mankind; as the Philosopher searches for the truth, and translates it in his formularies; so the Artist seeks the beautiful, and translates it in his works.

But a translation implies the existence of an original, and the Artist's great original is Nature. Nature is God's language, and Art is ours; Nature is a poem written by God, and Art is man's translation of it. It is thus that Art becomes a Witness; and its witness is twofold. In every rendering of the splendour of creation it is a witness to us of the glory of the Creator; in every gross conception that we place upon canvas or cut into marble it is a witness against us of the blindness of our eyes or the evil of our hearts.

The gods in stone that we can count by scores in our museums are more than grinning monsters or placid imbeciles; they are Art-witnesses of the passions that make the dark places of the earth full of the habitations of cruelty. The golden bells and pomegranates, the curiously wrought veil, the holy

and beautiful temple, were Art-witnesses of a people hallowed, ennobled, purified, transfigured by law and obedience which were to the Hebrew knowledge and virtue. The great works of the classic sculptors are more than realisations of the splendour of ideal beauty; they are witnesses of a ritual intellectual in the highest degree; they reflect the heroism of the warrior, the imagination of the poet, the learning of the philosopher. The paintings of Correggio and Da Vinci and Raphael are more than inimitable examples of colour or expression; they are witnesses of a new revelation; they evidence a loftier conception of the Divine character; they tell of the life, and passion, and glory of Christ.

These considerations would lead us to expect with the advance of science and the spread of pure religion a corresponding development in Art. And yet the two greatest schools of Art the world has seen, the Classic and Mediæval, perished—the first at the beginning of the Christian era—the second at a time coincident with the great revival of religion, when the Church of Christ arose to shake herself from the dust and to sit once more in beautiful garments.

Can it be true then, after all, that the sweet light of Christianity, which fills our churches, our laboratories, our homes, brings only darkness to the studio

of the Artist? Is this the witness of Art to our religion? Surely, no! Surely Art, not less than Science, shall witness to the truth. The extinction of Classic and the decadence of Mediæval Art may be traced to inherent causes. The cries which echoed through the "ten silent centuries" of Dante were not the cries of martyrs to æsthetic taste; and the conventional mannerisms into which the Renaissance fell were not less marked in those countries in which the Mediæval Church maintained its power.

Looking back through the long vista of the centuries, we see a people sunk in a black darkness like that which reigns in the still pagan world.* We see them with outstretched arms in the darkness, as if trying to touch but the hem of His garment who sitteth upon the throne. First make your gods;—this they proceed to do. Two pillars of stone placed side by side stand very

* When the argument necessitates a reference to or a restatement of a former proposition, what can be more natural than to use again the same words? And yet to do so is so unusual that the author feels an apology to be due to the reader. Although one may travel from England to the Italian Lakes by ever so many routes, one is almost sure at some central city or Alpine pass to come for a little while upon ground familiar as having been traversed on a previous journey. Why should the recognition of it be disguised? If they are objected to, however, the author has only to plead that his "passes" are but few and not of great length. Two or three pages cover the whole of his trespass in this respect on the patience of his readers.

well for Castor and Pollux, and a bar or slab laid across from one to the other expresses their mutual affection.

First make your gods;—ah, not so! That is the finishing stroke. The classic ritual began by the worship of just those things that could not be made—the sun, and moon, and stars. Then came the making of emblems; then hero-worship, and the ascription to the gods of all the passions of our sinful natures. This is the history of the Pantheon: this is the history of Classic Art.

Two blocks of stone were all very well for Castor and Pollux, and Homer may have been content to worship them thus: but when he began to sing about their sister Helen it was a very different matter; he found that he must give to her all the supreme loveliness of real womanhood. And then the sculptors followed; the van and rereward of the army of progress. We see the steady advance of civilisation and commerce; the development of a philosophy profound in thought, noble in its aspirations, grand in its conceptions of morality. The worship and ritual of Greece and Rome were intellectual in the highest degree; the writings of the philosophers have been textbooks for thinking men for two thousand years. The book of geometry Euclid wrote is the book we still use in our universities and schools, not a line added or erased, though Newton and Bacon and Herschel and Brewster have lived and

passed away. And the effect of this upon Art was to raise it from the dust to a throne of intellectual greatness, the like of which has been seen in no other country and at no other period of the world's history. The effect—for this is surely more than a coincidence; since not only was the general progress of Art and Philosophy concurrent, but we find a marked analogy between the transitions in the schools. Plato was the disciple of Socrates, and Aristotle the disciple of Plato; their lives embracing about a century, and representing the noblest and purest period of philosophy. But the same century embraced also the lives of Phidias and Praxiteles, and represented the highest state of Greek Art.

But the parallel is closer even than this. For while of the philosophers Socrates was the most profound, the noblest in his aspirations—of the sculptors Phidias was the grandest in conception; and it is these two who work together, alike in massiveness of thought and grandeur of design. And then, after a hundred years, it is Aristotle and Praxiteles who work together—also alike in flexibility of thought and dexterity and gracefulness of design.

We have but to turn to existing remains of Classic Art to verify this estimate of its grandeur. The Hercules Farnese is magnificent as the exponent, in form, of strength; the Apollo Belvedere is sublime as the

realisation of power, swiftness, grace; the Venus de' Medici is an ineffable conception of womanly loveliness —and if the realisation of strength, grace, and beauty is the one aim of Art there is an end of the matter; Classic Art has achieved this aim, and it remains for future generations to be disciples in its schools.

But if Art has no such limits, then the schools of Greece and Rome are weak as well as strong. The intellectuality of Apollo finds expression through the splendour of physical development, but there is no place in the studio for Aristotle's poor deformed face. Yet surely there must have been times when a fire flashed from his eyes as worthy of the artist's labour to immortalise as were the muscles of a wrestler. But what was the expression either of character or of passion to the Greeks, who rewarded Socrates with a draught of hemlock, and Phryne with a niche in the temples of the gods?

There is no expression in Greek Art.* The quoit-hurler is represented with a placid countenance, although

* This is not to be taken as the opinion of an adverse critic. I know, indeed, how very widely, and upon how many points critics differ in their judgment, and in what very decided language their differences are expressed. But while the writers of to-day are altogether at variance with those of a former generation—while M. Taine condemns the whole purpose and drift of English Art—while Mr. Ruskin may be said to be at issue with the whole world —the *fact* of this elimination of the expression of suffering from Classic Art appears to be unquestioned: nay, more, it is asserted

in extreme action. Acteon is unmoved either at the vision of the beautiful goddess or at the savage assault of his dogs; and the gladiator fights or dies in the arena with a lip exquisitely arched and a brow untouched by any of the fierce passions of the human heart.

If, then, we would express concisely this elimination of passion, this impersonality, this seizing always of

to be one of the chief excellences of the Antique. "This statue," says the editor of one of the most formidable of our encyclopædias, "exhibits the most astonishing dignity and tranquillity of mind in the midst of the most excruciating torments." The statue referred to is the "Laocöon." Let us consider it for a moment. The subject is taken from a well-known passage in Virgil. Laocöon, a priest of Neptune, is in the act of sacrificing with solemn pomp on the sea-shore. By his side are his two children. Suddenly, from the waves of the sea, come forth horrible monsters, cruel and fierce serpents:—

Their flaming crests above the waves they show,
Their bellies seem to burn the seas below;
Their ardent eyes with bloody streaks were filled,
Their nimble tongues they brandished as they came,
And licked their hissing jaws that sputtered flame.

It is thus described by Dryden. Swiftly they advance towards Laocöon and his two sons,—

And first about the tender boys they wind,
Then with their fangs their limbs and bodies grind.

The father attempts to save his children, but in vain; in an instant he also is in the coils of the serpents, and his terrific shriek is in our ears as the scene closes.

Now this is the incident chosen by the sculptors, and how do they render it? There is nothing more wonderful to me in the

the ideal or type rather than the individual, and of the type ignoring the inner life, we should say the leading characteristic of Classic Art was its coldness. Not that this coldness was its aim—its aim was the ideal; but this ideal was in itself an abstraction; cold, and yet compatible with the extremest sensuality; cold by infinite distance from the divine flame of love, which

art of criticism than the faculty of reading into a work of Art the particular characteristic you wish to find there. I look at the Laocöon and see the convulsed limbs, the quivering flesh, and they represent to me the torture of the body as surely as the agonised glance to heaven tells of the conflict of the soul.

But I turn to the writings of one committed to the theory that the standard of Greek Art *is* Greek Art. "The Laocöon," says Dr. Gillies, "may be regarded as the triumph of Grecian sculpture, since bodily pain, the grossest and most ungovernable of our passions, and that pain united with anguish and torture of the mind—is softened into a patient sigh. The horrible shriek which Virgil's Laocöon emits is a proper circumstance for poetry, but the expression of it would have totally degraded the statue."

I would take exception to this criticism on two grounds. In the first place because, for the very purpose for which it is here cited, the Laocöon cannot be regarded as an example of Greek Art. It was the work of Greek sculptors, but it was executed at a Roman court, under Roman patronage, and it bears the stamp of the transition from the severe serenity of Hellas to the more stormy atmosphere of the Capitol. It was to Greek Art what the music of Handel is to that of Germany. And secondly because, under the conditions of the sculptors' art, nothing can go further than does this statue in the expression of physical suffering. But the question is never raised as to the difficulty or possibility of worthily representing this great passion of pain and grief and fear; the judgment given is that it has not been attempted by the artists and that its realisation would have degraded the work. Such a position

only can raise us from the level of the brutes that perish, and transfigure our lives into the pattern of the life divine. Not, again, that the love or hatred of these men differed from the love or hatred common to man, but this love found no place in their religion, and therefore no expression in their works. Sorrow was an evil thing; why should it find perpetual remembrance in Art? Pain will touch our bodies, be they never so fair; but we need not mar our statues with its cruel touch. We seek the beautiful, and suffering is not beautiful; so, though its anguish may crush our lives, yet in Art at least we can cast it from our sight. And thus sorrow and pain and suffering were excluded from Classic Art; but at what a cost! There can be no compassion without sorrow, no deep sympathy without suffering, no heroic endurance without pain; so that in losing these things Art lost also the expression of all the tenderest and noblest emotions of which our natures are capable.

Thus Art became a witness of the people, of their

needs only to be stated to discover its refutation. It amounts to this—in Greek Art we do not find the expression of pain: this is Greek Art: therefore it does not express pain. If this be true the statue of Laocöon is nothing more than a cleverly executed anatomical model.

This was the first battle that Modern Art had to fight—against prejudice reaching almost to superstition. The victory, however, was not doubtful. The expression of passion is now recognised, not only as legitimate, but as one of the highest elements of Art.

lives, and their religion. It witnessed to great refinement of thought, but it witnessed also to the absence of all spiritual life. It told everything of the human frame in the splendour of its physical development; but it told nothing of that other life of man—the life of sorrow, of suffering, of fear, of hope, of love, of immortality.

It is true indeed that many of the legends of the Pantheon are capable of an eclectic gloss. How large a place they still occupy in our libraries, our conversations, in even our thoughts:—

> In the ears of the world
> They are sung, they are told,
> And the light of them hurled,
> And the noise of them rolled
> From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the Fleece of Gold.

But they awaken in us no passion or tender emotion or sweet sympathies; they move us to no action; they inspire us with no hope; they belong only to the Past;

> And they die, as he dies
> For whom none sheddeth tears,
> Filling the eyes
> And fulfilling the ears
> With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty, the splendour of spears.

The story of Adonis, as Arnold tells it, is full of pathos and beauty, and doubtless to the intellectual athlete such an interpretation may have been possible;

but the intellectual can no more do the work of the Paraclete than can the sensual. The worship of Adonis could never awaken a love through life unto death, even in minds of the highest culture; and to the masses it was wholly sensual, arousing it may be a fire of animal passion but leaving the heart entirely untouched.

Then came the decadence of Classic Art. Inevitable, terrible, irretrievable — like the demoralisation that seizes upon an army wasted by famine, decimated by pestilence, and whose leaders are divided in their councils. The great philosopher may have realised the higher interpretation of religious symbol, but symbol or its interpretation is but the shadow—there is no life in it at all. And to the philosopher succeeded the sophist; that is, men argued until in the multitude of words they lost the very essence of the truths they were discussing. And to the sophist succeeded the materialist: the eternal principles of truth dissolved in the subtleties and quibbles of the schools he could see no spiritual life at all, and so maintained that man is only the material organisation which we can see. And when this depth of degradation had been reached the descent was still more appalling. To the materialist succeeded the cynic, who prided himself upon contempt for beauty, as the materialist had despised virtue. And last in the dreadful march of evil came the sybarite.

Faith in a higher life destroyed, intellectual pursuits contemned, virtue scoffed at or hated, there remained only the animal life with its sensual pleasures; and what could this do for Art?

With the sybarite came the end. Classic Art perished, not because a greater force overthrew it or supplanted it: the early Christians, a small and despised sect, struggling for very life, or rather for something more than life, for their lives they did not hold dear—the early Christians had no school of Art. They carved rude records of their faith and hope and love, but they were not sculptors; they painted emblems very precious to us, but they were not painters; they turned the natural caves and rocks into temples, but they were not architects. Not until the Christian Church became dominant did Christian Art exist as a school, and that was centuries after Classic Art had perished—burned up with the fire of sensuality; not as the sacrifice is consumed, with the divine flame of God's acceptance, but with the blasting of His wrath, consuming sacrifice and priest and people.

II.

THE RENASCENCE.

THE last great sculptors of the Classic period were Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus. They must have been engaged upon the famous statue of Laocöon about the time when St. John, driven to the isle of Patmos, was writing the glorious visions of the Apocalypse. Then came a thousand years of darkness to the painter, and of silence to the poet, with nothing seen but blood, with nothing heard but the rush of armed feet that would tread down the new message, the message more divine, the message of love.

The story may be told in few words. Augustus, for whom Virgil wrote, and Vespasian, for whom the sculptors wrought, have passed away with the mighty empire of Rome. Ten times the Christians have been persecuted with cruel torments indescribable. War after war has deluged the world with blood: and yet steadily, with a power irresistible because divine, Christianity is marching to its triumph, like Christ upon the waters, storm

and tempest before, peace where its steps have been. At last out of the darkness we hear the voice of Dante; we see the quaint devices of the early Italian painters. It is like daybreak in a cathedral church,—

> When the first arrow from Apollo's bow
> Doth pierce the narrow casement of the east,
> And from the ghostly shade bright visions grow,
> Transfixed upon the walls, saint, king, or priest;

and the first great Christian poem is like a burst of solemn music rolling in mighty waves through transept, nave, and choir, heard in the distant chapels, reverberating through the vaulted roof. Since then many voices have joined in—Chaucer, and Shakespeare, and Milton—like the singing of a choir, each taking his part right nobly; but it was a grand thing for these men to awake the world to Poetry and Art. They had no great school from which to learn. The buried statues of Greece and Rome, with their serene beauty, had not been discovered. The wonderful pictures of Angelo and Raphael, Titian, Correggio, and Da Vinci had not been painted. They stood alone, with nothing to consecrate the past, nothing to make the future glorious, except the great, loving, living aspirations of their own hearts. But the great flame of such love as theirs cannot be quenched. They were architects, and built churches; they were sculptors, and adorned them with statues; they were painters, and covered the walls

with legends of the saints—quaint figures wrought upon a golden ground, half-picture and half-symbol.

How little was known of Art when these men lived. A painting by Cimabue was viewed with such astonishment that it was taken from his house and carried in solemn pomp and procession to the Church of the Virgin at Florence, attended by a number of performers on musical instruments, and amidst the loudest acclamations of the citizens. We look at the works of these men with wonder and delight, seeing in them the passionate outburst of a love of Art which led onwards to the full splendour of the school of Raphael.* Marga-

* Can it be necessary to say anything in justification of this high estimate of the genius of Raphael? That there should be such a thing as *fashion* in Art amongst the uneducated is to be expected; but that writers of eminence should differ so widely as they have done upon this question seems something like a satire upon Art criticism. The Abbé du Bos, in commenting upon the cartoons, describes how, in the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," the painter has given to every head a different character, corresponding closely with the known characteristics of the Apostles. One head in particular he points out as a marvellous impersonation of Judas. "The expression," he says, "is sullen and confused, as though the traitor was consumed with black jealousy."

But this figure which the Abbé supposes to be Judas, another critic not less learned, the Rev. Matthew Pilkington, claims as that of one of the faithful disciples; urging the impossibility of supposing Raphael to have been guilty of so gross an anachronism as "to have introduced so infamous a wretch at such a point of time, or to have grouped such a person amongst the apostles; who, as he was dead before, could not associate with them." And he adds, "The best apology that can be made for this mistake of

ritone may indeed be called the forerunner—Cimabue, Giotto, the Van Eycks, and Massaccio the evangelists —and the great masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the apostles of Christian Art. For what was their theme but Christ? The ruling thought still visible in their works—the one central figure that in the splendour of its divine beauty has consecrated Art for ever—was it not that of the Master? Art had become once more a language as surely as it had been with the Greek, but how much more it had to tell, and how differently it told it! The Classic and Mediæval schools agree in that they take the human form as the exponent

Du Bos, is that he was much better acquainted with the works of Raphael than with the works of the Evangelists."

This—coming from one Churchman to another—is sufficiently severe. But what shall we say of the painter? How much either of his critics had read of the sacred narrative I do not know; but the miracle is there described as having occurred twice; and everything in the picture indicates that Raphael intended to represent the first of these, before Judas was even numbered with the twelve.

Thus the criticism that begins with a sort of apotheosis of the thing criticised, ends with a disputed claim as to whether the same face is a splendid realisation of the evil passions of the arch-traitor, or an equally splendid realisation of the tender affection and awe-struck reverence of a faithful disciple greeting his risen Lord.

But see the rebound from such criticism as this. Before Raphael stands the iconoclast instead of the worshipper; the hammer has taken the place of the thurible; and the dust which goes up to heaven, as the works of the great painter are smitten to the ground, veil from us their splendour as effectually as did the incense of their apotheosis. To Mr. Ruskin it is but a small matter to have

of what they have to express, but they differ in that through the human form they express sentiments wide as the poles asunder. The religion of the Greek was a cold abstraction, coldly expressed; the religion of Christ is a living flame, and Art must express it pas-

demolished such painters as Claude, and Cuyp, and Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, Ruysdael, and Teniers, and Paul Potter, "Vandervelde, Backhuysen, and the various other Van-somethings and Back-somethings who more especially and malignantly have libelled the sea." But having committed these to the flames, he passes to the one painter of whom it is not too much to say that from him every artist born into the world for three hundred years has learned his Art. "Raphael," says Mr. Ruskin, "could think of the Madonna only as an available subject for the display of skilful tints, transparent shadows, and clever foreshortenings—as a fair woman forming a pleasant piece of furniture for the corner of a boudoir." And then, after describing with exquisite pathos the apparition of Jesus to the disciples at the Lake of Galilee, he contrasts Raphael's painting of it with the actual occurrence. He says, "Note the handsomely curled hair, and neatly tied sandals of the men who had been out all night in the sea mists and on the slimy decks. Note the convenient dresses for going a-fishing, with trains that lie a yard along the ground, and the goodly fringes all made to match—an apostolic fishing costume. Note how St. Peter especially, whose chief glory was his wet coat girt about his naked limbs, is enveloped in folds and fringes so as to hold the keys with grace. And the apostles are not around Christ, as they would have been, but straggling away in a line that they may all be shown. Beyond is a pleasant Italian landscape, full of villas and churches. The whole thing is a mere absurdity and faded decoction of fringes, muscular arms, and curly heads, and the wild, strange, infinitely stern, infinitely tender, infinitely varied veracities of the life of Christ are blotted out by the vapid fineries of Raphael."

This then is the judgment of a thoughtful, earnest, and accom-

sionately. For the influence of a religion on Art is not limited to its direct action on the individual worker; it reaches further than that, it governs the whole drift of Art, bending men to its service, even though individually they rebel against its precepts. We learn this in com-

plished writer about a painting that by common consent of the civilised world is esteemed one of the grandest in existence.

And what does such a judgment teach us? Not, I think, that Raphael was wrong: unless indeed it is wrong for the finite not to be infinite. But it teaches us this: that while Nature is always and everywhere perfect—comprehending all the splendour of life and passion and material beauty—Art can but reflect these things partially at the best, as visions seen in a broken mirror. Nature includes all beauty; Art is eclectic, choosing one phase or another as it affects the mind of the Artist, or as he can interpret it through his material. To complain that Raphael was not a realist is as futile as to complain that the sculptor does not distinguish between brown eyes and blue. The fruits of three centuries of travel and historical research are a clear gain to the modern; but that the early painter was without these advantages should not lessen our reverence for the good work he has done. Which was the nobler conception of the scene, where both are so noble, I will not venture to say. But taking the highest ground, that of Raphael was not less truthful than that of his critic. The one broke right through the accessories, and seeing only the Divine Majesty of Christ, and the glory almost divine of the Prince of the Apostles, strove to express these things through the splendour of symmetry and grace. The other dwells on the scene until the very ground seems hallowed because of the Master's footsteps, and he would not lose the sea mist, or dripping garments, or dishevelled hair—are they not all parts of the wild, strange, infinitely stern, infinitely tender story?

Why should we wonder if, looking with different eyes, men see different things. Before hastily condemning a painter it is well to consider whether we may not have been looking for something in his work—not that he failed, but that he did not care, to paint.

paring the lives of the painters with their works. In the Church of St. Peter, Perugia, there is a celebrated altar-piece representing the Ascension; it is the *chef-d'œuvre* of Perugino. Generations have worshipped before this picture, finding in it only a perpetual incentive to devotion, seeing only the majesty of our Lord and the fervour of His disciples, as they gaze upwards to their Master. It is forgotten that the painter was himself an unbeliever and a man of infamous character. Again, in the works of no painter do we find a more exalted purity than in those of Raphael, a purity reaching to the very souls of his saints. As we stand before the wonderful cartoons, or look into the blue eyes of his maidens, we see nothing to tell us of the painter's sensual life. The learning of Da Vinci, the versatility of Michael Angelo, the impetuosity of Tintoretto, the patience of Carlo Dolce, are all bent to the same purpose; so that if we would express concisely this direct aim at religious emotion, this seizing always the individual rather than the type, this daring disregard of abstract beauty, we should say the leading characteristic of Mediæval Art was its passion.

If we look at this more closely, we shall see that there was an element in Christian Art that Classic Art never admitted—that is, suffering. We have seen that the expression of suffering was abhorrent to the Greek

artists; that they uniformly suppressed it, rendering only the perfect ideal of human strength and grace and beauty. But that was Mount Olympus, where the gods reigned; a mount covered with pleasant woods, and caves, and grottos; on its top was neither wind, nor rain, nor cloud, but an eternal spring. The face of the Mediævalist was set towards another Mount, where One suffered, so that when His life had to be painted—His life made perfect through suffering—this suffering met the painter at every turn. Perhaps the Greek sought in the ideal that which the Christian looks for in redemption; but the Christian could not leave out this element of suffering, it had become a part of his faith. There was the glory also; but from the time when the great King passed through the everlasting gates, a countless host of saints and martyrs in His train, has one passed in the long procession whom this same suffering has not touched? And all this had to be rendered by the painter, and in all this there was a direct appeal to the emotions, so that Mediæval Art became as passionate as Classic Art had been cold.

If not in its passionate expression, wherein lay the true strength and greatness of the Renascence? Emaciation of the body, the fierce passions of the soul, occupy too large a space of the canvas to leave the palm to ideal beauty. We see this in the painter's choice of subject. The grandest work of Massaccio is

the "Christ healing the Demoniacs;" of Giorgione, the "Christ bearing the Cross;" of Giotto, the "Crucifixion" and the "Casting lots upon the Vesture;" of Albert Dürer, the "Ecce Homo;" of Tintoretto, the "Terrors of Martyrdom;" of Matsys and Rubens, the "Descent from the Cross;" of Michael Angelo, the "Last Judgment." And yet once more, if the strength of this school is not in the representation of ideal beauty, neither is it in realistic fidelity to Nature. In the Davids, the Melchizedecs, the Abrahams of Mediæval Art we discover no recognition of Eastern life or Oriental customs; while of the Madonnas there is not one that could be supposed to be of the royal house of David—they are all conceptions, more or less beautiful, of the countrywomen of the painters, Italian or German or Spanish as they were painted by Raphael or Hemling or Murillo.

Again then we are led to the same conclusion, that as the strength of Classic Art had been ideal beauty, so the strength of the Renascence was the passion of expression.

But in this passion there was danger as well as strength. The saints had taken the place of the gods in the artist's studio, but like the immortals they had also their weaknesses, against which holy water proved no better a panacea than the streams of Helicon. The sensuality of the gods was more than paralleled by the

morbid passions of the saints, and Mediæval Art sank to a degradation as much greater than that of the Classic schools as the ruin of the soul is more terrible than the decay of the body.

The decadence was not swift, but it was certain; and looking back we see how clearly it may be traced. The saints on canvas, like the gods in marble, degenerated. The supernatural virtue of Raphael's "St. Catherine" finds no counterpart in the works of Raphael's favourite pupil. Guercino is more earthly than the Caracci. Gerard Douw has none of the fiery splendour of Rembrandt. And there came a time at last when in the living roll of painters there was not one worthy to be named even with these masters. The coldness of Classic Art could not keep it alive, the passion of the Renascence could not keep it pure; and in its corruption what a degradation it reached!

Have we not seen it? Is there a cathedral or village church in the wide Catholic world that does not bear witness to this, in its waxwork Madonna or its black Christ?

Mediæval Art was religious or it was nothing. Mediæval Art in its first splendour was Art transfigured by contact with the divine character and person of Christ. But Mediæval Art sank to the making of painted images, to be dressed in muslin—images as really idols as were those of Greece and Rome, but altogether

without the material beauty which almost blinds the moral sense when we look upon the Apollo or Venus.

This was the witness of Mediæval Art. In the first splendour of its revival it witnessed to the cardinal truths of the Catholic faith,—that man has sinned and that God has redeemed; it told of the subduing of the body and of the illumination of the soul. And this it witnessed not as a tale of the imagination, but as a divine revelation. But it witnessed more than this: fresco and canvas, mariola and shrine, became records of faith resolved into superstition, of legend taking the place of Scripture story, of the miracles of the saints made to transcend the work of Christ.

But see the terrible irony of events. When Demetrius finding his craft in danger as a maker of silver shrines raised an uproar of the people, who for the space of two hours cried "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," did St. Paul see in the dark future any of the like dishonour that should be brought upon his Master's name? We cannot doubt but that he saw it, else why the tender and passionate warnings that fill his letters?

How often must even the temple of God be cleansed! And shall the schools escape the "scourge of small cords"?

To the Christian a revelation of the Truth has been given in the book of the Word written; to the Artist a revelation of the Beautiful has been given in the book

of Nature; and we are safe only as we closely follow these divine teachers.

They who do despite to the first revelation—placing reason in its stead, reasoning with finite faculties on things infinite—find themselves at last, with all their knowledge, believing nothing. They who do despite to this revelation—placing tradition or authority in its stead—find themselves at length drifting from all anchorage, tossed and beaten of every wave and blast of superstition, believing old wives' fables, and doubting nothing except perhaps the great truths of the Christian faith. This is no imaginary sketch, nor is it irrelevant to the subject. The same poetic justice pursues the Artist in his heresy. The Classic sculptor, scorning the natural and emotional as too gross to be allied with his high conception of ideal beauty, fell into the grossest of all systems, the materialistic.

Think for a moment of the gladiator as he dies in the arena—ten thousand faces round him, ten thousand voices ringing in his ears; seeing not the faces, hearing not the shouts, forgetting the lost prize—his eyes, his heart

> Were where his rude hut by the Danube lay;
> There were his young barbarians all at play,
> There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,
> Butchered to make a Roman holiday—
> All this rushed with his blood.

It is nothing to say that there is room here for senti-

ment, for emotion, for passion even to fury. What is the whole scene without it? Can we so much as conceive of it without it? Yet of this passion the sculptor has given nothing, and we cease to wonder that Classic Art should have perished, remembering that

> He that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
> Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
> Howling in outer darkness.

This is the heresy of infidelity in Art, and we have only to turn to the Renascence to find its parallel in the heresy of superstition. The beautiful in Nature was again forsaken, this time for the sake of emotional expression; and again was it visited by the same poetic justice. Mediæval Art fell to attempting to express the love of Christ by a rent body and a flaming heart. As the lofty ideal of Classic Art became grossly materialistic, so the passionate expression of Mediæval Art became utterly conventional.

At the same time, as surely as Reason and Authority should have their just weight in matters of faith, so the ideal and the emotional must have their influence in the schools of Art. The ideal is one element in the natural, the emotional is another element in the natural, but Nature is broader than either, and includes both.

This breadth, this comprehensive grasp of human life, not only in its material beauty or its high aspirations, but in its every phase—not isolated from the

other works of God, but knit together with the whole creation—this breadth has been the strength of the poet in all ages. It is expressed by Schiller when he says,—

> Whate'er is human, to the human being
> Do I allow, and to the vehement
> And striving spirit readily I pardon
> The excess of action.

This is more than a canon of Art, and in proportion as the Artist has learned it will he find himself strong. Strong with the strength of Homer, who with his choir of singing boys sang from house to house the immortal verse that in his blindness must have been inspired by other than material beauty; and with the strength of Milton, who, although to him also the world lay in darkness, made our rough language splendid with visions of the unseen world.

III.

THE MODERN SCHOOLS.

FOR the second time Art had sunk to a degradation from which nothing could redeem it except a new faith, a new hope, a new creation of religious and social life. And this came with the Reformation.

Not that the Reformation came with a more powerful school of Art to overthrow or supplant the Mediæval. Mediæval Art perished from inherent causes. Like the early Christians the Reformers had to fight for things more precious than Art. The ground had to be plowed up roughly and the seed sown, but at length the reformed faith took root and became a mighty tree, and the birds sang in its branches.

The ground was indeed roughly plowed up. First came the Iconoclasts. When we think of horses stabled in our cathedral churches, of stained glass dashed from the oriel windows, and delicate tracery beaten down with axes and hammers, it is difficult to realise that these men worked, blindly it may be, but

still worked for the Artist as well as for the patriot or the religionist. It was as though the Divine Master walking through the schools, had said "Children, ye do not honour Me thus, neither is this healthful to your souls." It was as though He had said "I will lead you to a better aim, a wider field of thought; ye cannot look upon Me in the wild passions of your fellows." It was as though He had struck out the distorted sketch and broken the imperfect model. It was as though He had driven them out into the fields, there to make them stand before Him face to face.

And what was the issue? The painter found that there was another world of which the schools had no conception; to these men the world of Nature must have seemed as fresh as though it had been created for them and for their canvases.

And what a world! Thinking of it we learn how much had been sacrificed by the Greek for ideal beauty, and by the Mediævalist for emotional expression; this other world—this world of Nature, where only we see beauty without sensuality, and passion without suffering or sin—this had been ignored by them both.

Filled as our eyes have been with visions of earth and seas and skies, of quiet lakes and streams, of storm and tempest, of sunny cornfields, Alpine snows, stately cities, country lanes, rocks, rivers, trees, pale moonlights, sunsets of gold and purple—remembering

such scenes, we stand amazed at the utter neglect of Landscape Art by the elder schools. Claude, indeed, and Poussin had ventured into the good land; but at the best we may liken them to the spies of old, who brought back a doubtful report. And the venerable Titian seems to have stood, like the great leader on Pisgah, seeing but not permitted to enter. He had studied under Bellini and Giorgione, he had been a student with Sebastiano del Piombo, he had been jealous of Tintoretto. Ghirlandaio, Andrea del Sarto, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Perugino, Albert Dürer, Matsys, had been his companions in Art, and had laid down their palettes believing that the victory was altogether on their side. He had lived to see the recognition of that higher authority both in Revelation and in Nature.

But Art is of slow growth. It does not win its way like an evangel of truth, bending the wills of men, overcoming all antagonism and making a pathway for itself. Thus the transition from Mediæval to Modern Art was the work of many generations. First came the mannerisms of the seventeenth century; Guido, Carlo Dolce, the Caracci, Rembrandt, and Rubens were great painters, but they were not of the supreme rank of Raphael, Da Vinci, Angelo, Correggio, and Titian, whose works they studied. And the secret of this is that while the masters drew their inspirations

direct from the great source, the disciples were but schoolmen taking the fallible as a rule of faith, content to follow canons of Art derived from the schools rather than from the direct study of Nature.

This is deserving of the most earnest attention, for the question almost wholly turns upon it. Think for a moment of the relative positions of these men. Surely God was as willing to teach them whom I have called the disciples as He was to teach the masters. He held before their eyes the same beautiful creation, they had everything that the first masters had—and with it the works of the masters themselves to show them what great things could be done. Why should they not have reached a still greater excellence? Because they were content to do again what others had already done. One was ambitious to excel Raphael, another to surpass Correggio, another to out-do Titian. They followed where others had led, and followers cannot be leaders. They looked at Nature not with their own eyes but through the eyes of Angelo or Raphael; and they read her wonderful story, not direct from God's original, but through a translation, as though the original had been to them a strange language.

In the meantime Claude and Poussin of France, and Cuyp and Paul Potter of the Low Countries, were beginning to feel their way towards the school in

which Nature should be supreme mistress. And again it is more than a coincidence, that concurrently with the awakening of the Church and the fresh appeal to divine revelation, not only should the old philosophy give place to natural science, the schools to the laboratory, men daring to investigate before believing, but that the Artist also should have been inspired with a like earnestness for a higher appeal than to the traditions of the studio. Timid students were these men, Claude and Cuyp and Paul Potter, compared with the landscape painters of our own school, but to them belongs the honour of first having dared. It is difficult now to realise through what conventionality and prejudice they had to break, a conventionality that emasculated Art, a prejudice from which even the greatest minds freed themselves but painfully and slowly. There is a quaint legend of the patriarch Methuselah; it is said that having lived about five hundred years of his long life, he was visited by an angel, who cried "Arise, arise, Methuselah, and build thyself a habitation!" "How long have I still to live?" asked the patriarch. "Five hundred years more," replied the angel. "Then," said Methuselah, "if I have only five hundred years before me it is scarcely worth while to build me a house now."

How severe, but how true a satire on the terrific force of habit over the human mind—the indolence

of going on for ever in the same rut. And Art was doing this; the rut was only deepening and widening; it needed more than the visit of an angel to turn its path from the very Slough of Despond. I am not now referring to the great school of Catholic Art in its first grandeur and strength. Its decadence has been already traced. The genius was gone, the originality was gone, the afflatus was gone, but the habit of thought remained—like "the strong man armed that kept the house." The Reformation was "the man stronger than he."

Nor is it to be implied that the excellence of a painter's work can be measured by the orthodoxy of his creed. We have seen that the influence of religion on Art is not to be looked for in its direct action on the individual worker, but rather in its cumulative force through every sympathy and association of national life. Thus, some of the noblest pictures of the English school, pictures strong in every characteristic of Modern Art, have been painted by devout Catholics; while on the other hand many of the Madonnas and saints of the Mediævalists, which are still the glory of Continental shrines, are the works of men who, like Albert Dürer, were the friends and sturdy helpers of Luther.

The effect of the Reformation was, however, to break up the degenerated school of Mediæval Art. The altars went with the sacrifices, and the altar-pieces

with the altars, and the painter was compelled to seek other subjects for his pencil than the morbid legends of the calendar; he was driven to the fields to learn there, for the first time, how precious are all the works of the Creator.

But this is not all. This rough work of the Iconoclasts—this breaking of the models long established—was only the negation of the new evangel; its influence did not end there; it inspired the painter with a spirit analogous to what theologians call the right of private judgment. Hitherto men had worked in schools or systems; the theories of Art were transmitted from master to disciple. Thus the Caracci followed Correggio, and Guido followed the Caracci. It was a new thing when Paul Potter took his canvas out into the fields, and as the cattle munched the clover, or gazed dreamily into his face, painted meadow and cattle simply as he saw them, without reference to how they should be painted according to the schools.

But in this direct appeal to Nature, and in this independent interpretation, was the very life and strength of Modern Art; and this love and reverence of Nature became a passion with the painter when, in a tempestuous sea, Turner would take his place in a lifeboat and go out to a wreck that he might watch more closely the colour of the waves as they roared over him mountain high; or when at the close of his

sad life he stole away from his companions, and found a quiet lodging where unobserved he might creep out upon the roof, and gaze upon the sun rising or setting beyond the river he had loved to paint, and where he might die with no face between his and the blue and gold and purple of the heavens.*

If then in Nature there is ideal beauty—this is for the painter; if majesty and power, if tenderness and passion—this is the theme of Modern Art. Not forgetful of the beautiful nor scorning emotional expression, but limiting itself to neither—if we would express this concisely, with the coldness of Classic, and the passion of Mediæval, we should contrast the breadth of Modern Art.

The more closely we look into the subject, the more clearly we are led to this conclusion. How manifold are the types of beauty in the world. There is the beauty of delicacy and grace; take for example the beauty of a woman's arm—its fair white roundness and exquisite proportions. How well the Greeks appre-

* There is nothing more certain in criticism than that to appreciate the true strength and greatness of any school of Art it is necessary to identify oneself with the spirit of the age from which it emanated. From any other standpoint the critic is sure to err in his judgment. He will either, in the excess of adulation, extol the Artist for some glaring defect; or, in the Procrustean determination to cut everything to his own measure, he will carp at some conditions which were inevitable. In a former note I have given instances of such criticism, applied to the Classic and Mediæval

hended this we see in the Venus de' Medici, a transcendent realisation of womanly grace. But what would a woman's arm be to wield a sledge-hammer and to beat hot iron into shape upon an anvil? And so we find that there is another kind of beauty, that of strength; a beauty not inferior to that of grace,—

> With large and sinewy hands;
> And the muscles of his brawny arms
> Are strong as iron bands.

There is a distinct splendour in this—a splendour not

schools. It may be interesting to see it also in its application to the works of our English painters.

M. Taine, writing recently in a French journal, says that in England there are to be seen on every hand "Landscapes in which blood-red poppies are set in grass the tint of a green parrot. Apple-blossoms on trees whereof the staring white petals against the dark branches are a sight to behold! Green churchyards where each blade of grass shows its brightness like the blade of a penknife. Sunsets which might certainly be mistaken for displays of fireworks." And M. Taine accounts for all this by a half-compassionate, half-contemptuous description of our surroundings. The raw green covers of our books, the flaunting and over-done dresses of our women, the aspect of our meadows, our flowers, our country seen under a sudden gleam of sunshine. "These Englishmen are poets and workmen, but they are not artists, and we gladly turn from their pictures because they are so ugly."

Now it matters very little whether it is the lens that is defective or the plate that is warped; in either case the beautiful vision will be distorted in the camera. Is this a case of distortion? I cannot but hope that it is; and I am encouraged in the hope by observing that it is not alone on our canvases that the colour of our landscapes appears to be so appalling to M. Taine. It is out-of-doors as well. The aspect of our meadows—our flowers, our country

lost even in the heat and grime and blackness of the forge. And the Greeks knew this, and realised it in their Hercules. But there is a third type of beauty. It is neither to the delicate arm of a woman, nor to the banded muscles of an athlete that we look for swift, unerring power; the one could not lift the weapon to strike; the other might strike fiercely enough, but wide of the mark. This third type the Greeks realised in their Apollo. The arm that draws his bow is strong, but not with brute force only; it is graceful, but not

seen under a sudden gleam of sunshine." These suffer the same condemnation. But it is well, perhaps, for us to know the worst, lest in our insular pride we should take to glory in the greenness of our fields, which will laugh out in gladness under the provocation of a little sunshine.

So M. Taine hates the colour of what he calls our "Protestant Art," and yearns for a return to the great Pagan school. So men *will* differ, and *do* differ in their judgments, according to their sympathies and associations; and when the sympathies and associations of many men are bent together, and in one direction, the result is a school.

And at the present time men's minds are thus bent together, and in one direction, and by a mighty influence, to a more patient study of Nature; to a casting away of the traditions of the studio; to a determination to read for themselves—and in the great original—the King's message to His children about the Beautiful. The hope of the Modern school is in this alone—that to them it is no more this "too common Nature." They see in her a splendour more dazzling than in the schools of Greece and Rome—a glory ineffable and unattainable—yet at all times revealing herself to the painter, like Beatrice to Dante—lifting him higher—drawing him onward, until at length, like Dante, if he sees her no more, it is only because she has brought him straight to the Throne of God.

with the grace of tenderness; it expresses the loftiest intellectual as well as the grandest physical development. We have seen that to these types the Mediævalist added that of the saint. Meekness, endurance, zeal, became new types of human beauty. St. Sebastian pierced with many arrows is no Adonis; yet there is a holy fire in his eyes that the Greek never knew. St. Catharine ready to be broken on the wheel is no nymph for a satyr's lust; but her sweet face shows us more of heaven than we can see in all the gods of high Olympus. But beauty does not end even here. In the limitless splendour of the creation Modern Art has found new types; and this not only in landscape, but in human life. Extreme beauty, extreme virtue, extreme heroism do not make up the whole of this same human life; there are rough hands and warm hearts that cannot be ranked with either the Apollos or the saints. There are such things as simple toils, daily cares and lowly sorrows; there are such heroes as Burns's "Cottar," Goldsmith's "Village Pastor," Hood's "Semptress;" and Modern Art, in its great breadth, includes them all.

Very splendid is the Mediæval expression of passion, whether by painter or poet. Who that has read the "Divine Comedy" can forget Dante's first vision of his Beatrice? After the terrors of hell, the bitterness

of purgatory, the wall of fire through which he will pass because she is on the other side :—

> Saying, "Her eyes I seem to see already!"
> A voice that on the other side was singing,
> "Venite, benedicti Patris mei,"
> Sounded within a splendour which was there
> Such it o'ercame me, and I could not look.

With what a splendour the words of the Florentine must have filled the studios of the early painters from the time when his friend Giotto placed him in Paradise, the youthful Dante, holding the pomegranate in his hand.

No doubt God sends such singers to help men as they climb.

And the Modern school has not been without these messengers. The name "Alighieri"—*a wing, or*, that is, *on a field azure*—was Dante's by inheritance: but Milton did more than inherit it; he gave to it a meaning. His life spelled out the mystery of the emblazonment. His were the wings of gold; his were the blue heavens; and his flight such that we who sometimes lift our eyes to follow him are almost blinded as we gaze. And if this is true of Milton what shall we say of Shakespeare? except only that it may be doubted whether his works could have found existence through any school of thought other than that which teaches us to submit our souls to God alone.

And thus, as painting follows after poetry; as Raphael and Titian and Buonarotti follow Dante, filled with the fire of his passion, reflecting the complexion of his religion in their works: so the influence of the Reformation through its writers again reaches the painter, leading him from narrow traditions of Art, where he is himself model and student and teacher, to Nature, where he may learn for ever, building again the temple of Art, not alone as a throne for ideal beauty, nor as a cloister for the devotee, but with foundations as broad as God has Himself laid them in creation.

Once more, then, Art has become a Witness; a witness of faith in the one Eternal God who in His wisdom created all things very good. Men with earnest love, striving to imitate some early saint, had missed the very spirit of that saint—the looking only to Christ. Men of noble powers, seeking to follow closely some great master, missed the very spirit of that master's work, who drew his inspiration from no second source; and the Witness of Art from first to last is this, that as in Revelation so in Nature we have direct access to the Divine Master, and that His work alone is to be trusted.

I will only add that in this breadth there is safety as well as strength. W. Hunt has taught us that there is nothing amongst the works of God too humble for the

painter's pencil—Turner has taught us there is nothing too sublime. David Cox, in the marvellous impetuosity of his genius, was perhaps the Tintoretto of Modern Art, and De Wint, in his contemplative sweetness, the Fra Angelico. In their works the ideal is vivified and the emotional restrained by a constant appeal to Nature.

But still, the great schools of Classic and Mediæval Art have perished, and shall modern Art endure? If in every rendering of the splendour of creation it is a witness to us of the glory of the Creator; if in every gross conception that we place upon canvas or cut into marble it is a witness against us of the blindness of our eyes and the evil of our hearts; then the rise or decadence of a true school of Art becomes a matter of infinite moment to us all. Artist and Philosopher and Evangelist must press onwards and together. It is in vain that we look back to the time when the gods or the saints reigned in the studio. Scepticism might bring again the coldness of Pagan Art, but without the Pantheon it cannot give us another Phidias or Polycletus. Superstition might restore the morbid passion and conventionality of Mediæval Art, but it has no promise of a Da Vinci, a Titian, or a Raphael.

But allied with a living and true faith, Art should rise for ever higher. It may be that we are still only with outstretched arms in the darkness trying to touch

the hand of the Divine Master; but led by Him—fulfilling its legitimate purpose in the development of man—giving its true reverence to God and not another—pandering to no lust or sensual passion—Art shall never perish, until its landscape be forgotten when we walk the fields of Paradise, its architecture when we reach the city that hath foundations, and when instead of painting heroes or saints we shall look upon the face of Him—their Master and ours.

BLESSING THE CORNFIELDS;

OR, LANDSCAPE ART

IN POETRY.

I.

CERES.

I HAVE no hesitation as to the use of the word "blessing." It is the right word, only it must be taken in its simple meaning, "to praise, to glorify for benefits received; to praise, to magnify, to extol for excellences; to esteem blessed or count happy."

As to the cornfields, I take them as a symbol of the splendour of the natural creation. I might, indeed, have said the forests—but they seem to stand apart from us, they are not so interwoven with our life. I might have said the rivers—but they are glorious rather by virtue of the land that hems them in. Who cares to sail slowly down the Rhine from Düsseldorf to Leyden?—and yet the waters are the same that whirled past the Loreley, or raced with the Moselle—two rivers in one channel, yet not mixing their waters. I might have said the ocean—but the majesty of the sea is sometimes that of terror, and another word is on our lips, not blessing, unless we have eyes to see Him there

beneath whose footsteps the waves are still; and so we turn from the sea to the cornfields, whose waves are life, not death.

And such waves! In Russia you may ride a hundred miles and see nothing but the yellow corn like a sea of gold, and hear nothing but the rustling of the slender stems. So infinite in change; there is the fresh upturned earth, the pale green blade, the silver whiteness of the ear, changing by the alchemy of heaven to the deep, deep gold. So wrought into our lives; so dear in its associations; its seed-time and harvest; the patient cattle bending to the yoke; Ruth gleaning; even the Master Himself who went through the cornfields one Sabbath eighteen hundred years ago, and His disciples plucked the ears of corn and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

Remembering these things, the cornfields have become to me the type of landscape beauty, and, placing the two words together, my subject stands declared: "Blessing the Cornfields," blessing the infinite glory of the world around us, magnifying it, glorifying it for its great beauty, witnessing to the splendour of the natural creation.

For the poet and the painter are witnesses; it is not their mission to create—they see and bear record. The poet does this, and by virtue of the flexibility of speech he can express it with a range almost infinite. The

musician and the painter do the same, though with media less ductile they can each give but a limited, if perhaps more distinct, vision of its glory.

Now for the moment we must forget the musician's part in this beautiful trio. Even that of the painter will concern us only so far as it has a direct bearing on Landscape Art in Poetry; but we cannot leave it out altogether. For Poetry and Art are so closely allied that they seem to be the same in essence, differing only in manifestation. If the poet quickens and enlarges the painter's vision, the painter intensifies that of the poet; so that while it is true that painting follows after poetry, that many of the finest works of art the world has seen are but the presentments of the poet's thoughts, yet it is also true that the painter has given as well as received. And of his gifts—of the effects, that is, of painting upon poetry—the greatest is in this matter of Landscape Art.

I know, indeed, that the poet has never, like the painter, been absolutely blind to its great splendour. In the Greek and Latin bards, in Dante and Spenser, in all the Masters of Song, we find magnificent indications of the apprehension of a beauty that painters of the same periods never attempted to realise. As to the poetry of Holy Writ, we have no works of art inspired in like manner with which we can compare it. There everything is strong, with the strength of Him whose

mind it speaks. There the "green pastures" and "still waters" are not eclipsed even by "the shadow of the dark valley." There the tremulous murmur of the willows and sad tide of the rivers of Babylon are not drowned even in the terrific cry, "Blessed be he that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against the stones."

But these songs of the "Chief Singer unto the Chief Captain" are exceptional; nowhere else do we find this absolute completeness, this perfect vision that can look straight into the divine light, and still unblinded see the loveliness of the little wayside flower. The Greek poet, indeed, shows us "Ilion's steep tower; where the wild fig-trees join the walls of Troy" — but this is only as a background to the picture of the blameless wife, the sweet Andromache, who has left the court that she may climb there and watch the doubtful battle, if peradventure she may discern the form of her beloved Hector. The billows thundering on the shore, or the yellow corn or crystal streams of Virgil, are forgotten in the cry of Laocöon or the pipe of Daphnis. The Third Vision of Dante would be no paradise without its Beatrice—and the beautiful garden of Theseus, as Arcite and Palamon see it through the iron bars of their dungeon, exists only for the gentle girl that walks there, who is, as Chaucer tells us, "more fair than the fair lily on its stalk of green."

Thus from the first the poet has touched Landscape Art — treating it, however, always as an accessory to scenes of historic or dramatic interest, and never trusting it as a central theme. But with the modern school of Landscape Painting there has grown up a distinct school of Landscape Poetry. Surely during the five years that Milton spent in Italy, a mind so susceptible as his must have learned something from Claude Lorraine, who was then filling the world with his praise. There is much of Claude's spirit in his "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," where landscape becomes at once the leading characteristic. And amongst living painters and poets this reciprocal influence is still more marked. That which our greatest landscapists have done on canvas, our greatest poets have not failed to do in the sweet rhythm of language.

> O curfew of the setting sun, O bells of Lynn,
> O requiem of the dying day, O bells of Lynn.
>
> From the dark belfries of yon cloud-cathedral wafted,
> Your sounds aërial seem to float, O bells of Lynn.
>
> Borne on the evening wind, across the crimson twilight,
> O'er land and sea they rise and fall, O bells of Lynn.

Is not Longfellow as true a landscapist as Turner? This exquisite sketch—is it not conceived in the very spirit of Turner's pencilling? And observe how the refrain, "O bells of Lynn," is made by the poet to

serve the same purpose that colour does in the hand of the painter. Just as in a sunset a glow of crimson or gold is suffused throughout the picture, giving warmth and richness everywhere, yet nowhere destroying the integrity of the real colours, so by this rhythmic cadence the different parts of the poem are knit together and the whole becomes a perfect vision.

> The fisherman in his boat far out beyond the headland
> Listens, and leisurely rows ashore, O bells of Lynn.
>
> Over the shining sands the wandering cattle homeward
> Follow each other at your call, O bells of Lynn.
>
> The distant lighthouse hears, and with his flaming signal
> Answers you, passing the watchword on, O bells of Lynn.
>
> And down the darkening coast run the tumultuous surges,
> And clap their hands and shout to you, O bells of Lynn.
>
> Till from the shuddering sea, with your wild incantations
> Ye summon up the spectral moon, O bells of Lynn.
>
> And startled at the sight, like the weird woman of Endor,
> Ye cry aloud, and then are still, O bells of Lynn.

This is "Landscape Art in Poetry," and perfect of its kind; this is "Blessing the Cornfields," though in it there are no cornfields at all. The essence of the thing is this—that the poet does praise, does glorify, does magnify, does extol for excellences; and the theme of this accumulated love and thanksgiving is the face of Nature, and that for its own sake; the

clouds for their own weird beauty—not because they bring the rain for the market-gardens; the crimson twilight for its own deep splendour—not because it indicates a fine day to-morrow; the fisherman in his boat for the sake of the dark blot he makes against the horizon—not because he is bringing a good haul of herrings to be salted; the wandering cattle—not because they are good for the pole-axe or the milk-pail, but for the sake of the moving mass of shadow and the changing glisten of the sand beneath their feet.

And yet Virgil was a landscape poet, and Claude was a landscape painter, but neither of them knew the full glory of Landscape Art. They trusted to a Cyclops, or a nymph, or a goddess in the clouds to help them in a difficulty, when they should have listened only to the whispering of the leaves, and seen only the tremor that runs through the cornfield when the sun rushes up from beyond the purple mountains.

This hesitancy of the early poets and painters to trust Nature is not without a very natural explanation. Even now, although the facilities for travelling have so increased that there is scarcely an artist who has not seen the different glory of the sky in different climates, the raging of the sea beating upon the rocks, or its quiet waters slipping away from the sands, the hills, the forests, the rivers of the country, the solemn cathedrals, and quaint old streets of the cities—even

now curious eyes are opened unnecessarily wide when one of our great historical painters turns for a moment from the faces of men to follow the brook to the river, or the river to the sea. Great painters should have minds so large that they can apprehend all beauty. And yet life is so short that before most men the choice lies only between doing one thing well or failing altogether. This it is that has divided, and must still divide, the Art world. Even they who sow and reap the cornfields labour in distant groups.

But though the choice lies always before the painter, the circumstances that govern his choice are for ever varying. To-day the splendour of earth and sea and sky may possess for us attractions greater than the expression of human passion or the serene beauty of ideal form. But it was not always thus. When travel was not so easy a matter as it is now—when a day's journey on foot measured the distance that most men travelled in a lifetime, it is not surprising that the taste for landscape scenery should have been less cultivated. A narrow range of vision creates but little yearning for the beautiful in Nature. The row of lime trees on the village green could scarcely be expected to awaken in the young villager the most ardent aspirations after Art.

But it was never so with the human form and the passions of human life. There has been no period

when the peasant did not meet face to face the very ideal of human beauty.

The lady of the neighbouring castle, like Chaucer's Emelye, fulfilling missions of charity such as are still the glory of womanhood, would be to the poor and sick as a beatific vision. The Geraints and Enids would for ever come upon the rustic as in Tennyson's first Idyll. And let it be remembered that though in all ages men of noble birth and high education have been poets and painters, yet the greatest of the brotherhood have more often been drawn from the humbler ranks of life.

Think for a moment of a youth, with a reserved and thoughtful temperament, intensely affected by the beautiful but otherwise apparently dull, because this love of the beautiful found no scope for expression. It was a longing for something to satisfy an æsthetic life which rebelled at mathematical deduction and wearied of grammar, because such studies did not fill the soul with visions of its ideal. Think of this youth, of humble parents, counted a dunce at school, and taken thence to be apprenticed to a pastrycook. Think of him surrounded by scenes of great pastoral beauty—fine forests, rich meadows watered by the Moselle. Think of him as he runs away—away, he knows not where, only away—from the tarts and pies and sweetmeats—hungry and footsore, but with the sky above

him and the trees and rivers and fields around him. Poor boy! the jam and sugar-plums satisfied him no more than did the old school tasks. And with all this remember that he is to become a great painter—but what shall he paint?

He reaches Rome; his manners are so untaught, he is so ignorant of the language, that he can obtain no employment, until at last a painter hires him to do his household drudgery and to grind his colours. To grind his colours; well, here his life is to begin. He who could not work at school or in the shop can work well enough now. His master teaches him some of the elements of Art—what shall we expect him to paint?

He must realise the beautiful in some form. To him it has been given to see and hear and feel through his eyes. The Divine Master did not inspire him to paint jam-tarts and sugar-plums. He would scarcely care to paint the companions who dubbed him dunce. He positively could not paint the great heroes in whose presence he had never stood, and of whose glorious deeds, being a dunce, he had never read. The skies, the rivers, the trees, these are his gods; these only have not thrust him from them offended at his stupidity; these only have recognised in him the divine gift of the great Master. He shall be a Landscape painter.

Now think of another youth—the son of a noble

house, quick at learning, associated from early manhood with the great men of his age, filled with the lore of his country's history, trained to knowledge of men and manners, loving the analysis of human thought and passion, visiting the chief cities and courts of Europe—and with it all having upon him that irresistible influence, the afflatus of Art. What shall he paint? He also may have loved the skies and trees and rivers, but they have not been to him his life. He shall be an historical painter.

The first of these is Claude Lorraine—the second is Leonardo da Vinci. And I have put their lives in this form because together they are types not only of painters but of schools of Art.

For what makes a school of poetry or painting but the circumstance of many men being influenced in the same direction, and governed more or less by the same modes of thought.

The Assyrian, dwelling in the great city of Nineveh, patiently working with mallet and chisel at the winged bull, will cut into it the thoughts that fill his mind. The king—the great King of Assyria—with his conquering army, will presently return in triumph; and the story will have to be told of the battle, and it will be for him to depict the warriors, and the king's chariot, and the captive Israelites, and the slain under the chariot wheels.

Victor and vanquished have alike passed away, but the sculptured stone remains; and we can look at it quietly in the British Museum and judge how the sculptor did his work. We see that he expressed the

human form with a certain degree of force and dignity. We see the king with a manifest grandeur of action. We see the warriors more impetuous; the defeated borne down. We see the horses and chariots skilfully and accurately rendered.

But for the landscape—words would fail to describe it. It reminds one of the story of the painter who, in

exhibiting his picture, found it necessary to explain, "This is Daniel, and those are the lions." For surely, in looking at the landscape of the Assyrian artist, some such exegesis is called for. It is doubtful, indeed, whether any explanation can make it quite intelligible. For example, an army is represented retreating over a bridge, or narrow strip of land with water on each side. The figures are capitally drawn, but the only indication of the river is a row of fishes above and below, half of them with their noses turned up, and half of them with their noses turned down.

We admire the expedient, yet not without surprise—surprise, not that these men were unable to draw more correctly, but rather that with their helplessness to represent the simplest object of a landscape they should have approached so very closely to a true rendering of that which is more difficult to express—the human form.

But if we turn from these half-barbarous examples to the High Art of the Classic period we find the same thing recurring. Again the influence of the national life upon the schools becomes as manifest as the influence of the individual life upon the work of each artist. The passions of their gods; the majesty of their kings; the heroism of their warriors; the beauty of their women; the pluck of their gladiators—these were the themes that fired the soul of Greek and Roman.

And think for a moment what all this meant to the poet and the painter. In the gladiator he saw the development of the human frame in its strength and flexibility; in the king he saw the human form in its dignity; in the warrior, still the man—not standing apart and scientifically directing the issue, but in the breach himself, the Hector of the fight. In woman, again, he saw the human form—robed with perfect modesty and grace, but still the human form—not Elizabethan walls, built up of materials known or unknown, in which a human form is supposed to move.

But the modern artist—Nature he sees, but man never. He does see the individual, he does dissect with his scalpel, he does know every bone and muscle, better perhaps than did the Greek; but the human frame, as a living thing—in stillness, in fierce conflict, in passion of great joy or triumph, in pain, and weariness, and anguish — this he does not see, and so he cannot paint it.

We read in Homer of the shield, made by the Artist God at the entreaty of Thetis, that she might present it to Achilles. Were there no cornfields there? Ah, yes,—

> Forests and streams, with scattered cots between,
> And fleecy flocks that whiten all the scene.
> Fields furrowed deep, or high with waving grain,
> Children and women with the reaper train.

Is not this Landscape Art? Yes; but it is Land-

scape Art in Poetry. Where is Achilles' shield? The gods are immortal, yet it seems that their works may perish—or perhaps the warrior carried it with him to the Elysian Fields when he became immortal too. As

to the works of Art which do remain to us, they were made by men—and we fail to see in them that exquisite rendering of Nature which we should have expected from the accomplished Greek. The outline in the margin is from a rare Antique. It represents Jason preparing to seize the Golden Fleece, while Medea charms the ever-watchful Dragon. But the tree! It

would be manifestly unfair to judge a school by this early work. Yet it is sufficient to indicate the disparity that already existed between the landscape and figure-drawing of Classic times.

Of the Greek landscapists, however, we know very little, for the heirlooms of Classic Art are but of one kind. We have the cloud-compelling god, but nothing of the cirrus or cumulus that fill the sky. Instead of the sunrise we see Aurora: instead of the fields we see Pan. Were there no forests of dark cypress then to lie beneath the white moon?—we see only Diana as she stoops to kiss Endymion. Was there no blaze of light in the meridian sky?—we see only Apollo in his chariot. Were there no cornfields?—we see only Ceres.

And when, after a thousand years of silent darkness, the Arts revived, it was a renascence to Passion rather than to Nature. I have already traced this renascence in its association with Religious Art, and shown how it affected the Schools in concentrating the painter's thoughts upon the expression of human emotion. The poet was held by no such conditions, hence the sweet outbursts of song that came like blessings on the cornfields, even while the seed was yet lying in the dark ground. But to the early painters the ground was indeed very dark and cold. There is no difficulty in finding in the Mediæval school a parallel to the well-

drilled regiment of Assyrian fishes. Amongst the mosaics in St. Mark's, Venice, there is a representation of the Deluge. The Ark is seen resting upon the waters. Here then was an opportunity—nay, rather a

necessity—for Landscape Art. But how are the waves represented? By a series of twisted lines or curious coils, that stand to Nature only in the relation of a hieroglyph. And yet, by the same hand, on the same walls, are mosaics of saints and martyrs, kings and priests, visions of the Apocalyptic splendours, our Lord seated in majesty with angels and archangels casting their crowns at His feet; so that again we are met by the strange spectacle of a School of Art able to express

with power and grace every action or passion of the life of man, yet as blind to the loveliness of the natural world, and as helpless to express its glory, as a child who makes his first essay with slate and pencil.

With such mural paintings commenced the great revival of Art, which reached its culmination only through the patient labour and splendid genius of three centuries. Thus in the thirteenth century we find such men as Margaritone and Cimabue; in the fourteenth and fifteenth, Giotto, the Van Eycks, Massaccio, Angelico, and Ghirlandaio; and in the sixteenth century appeared that great company — the apostles of the Renascence—Giorgione, Da Vinci, Raphael, Perugino, Correggio, Titian, Veronese, Angelo, Holbein, Matsys, Dürer, Tintoretto — twelve names the glory of Mediæval Art.

But observe, among them all there was not one true landscape painter. Landscape was, indeed, used as an accessory—and men, not of the first rank, accomplished great things, if greatness in Art is to be measured by the yard—and marvellous things, if we are to be content with the grotesque. Paul Brill painted a picture sixty-eight feet long, and Breughel ornamented his landscapes always and everywhere with little devils. These were the representatives of Landscape Art until Claude came; or rather during all this time there was not a landscape painter in the

world. It was Claude, and Cuyp, and Paul Potter who began to lead the way into the Cornfields—timidly at first, as though they stood on dangerous ground. O that weary journey over Alsatian fields! O that climbing of the Alps! Child, child, hungry and footsore, where art thou leading us? O serene glory of the eternal hills! O first sight of the Italian plains! Claude, Claude, what if we follow thee? New splendours upon our path. The face of Aurora growing brighter until, behold, a sunrise! Diana stooping no more to kiss Endymion—but the moon fringing the dark forest with her silvery light. Apollo no more in his chariot—but a blaze of sunshine in the meridian sky. Ceres no more garlanded and drawn by oxen—but the oxen ploughing the Cornfields or bearing the harvest home.

II.

THE KING'S GARDEN.

IF upon a stringed instrument of music we strike but a single chord and listen, we hear sweet echoes from the other strings, not only from octave to octave, but even the thirds and fifths taking up the sounds in antiphonal response. And it is thus with Poetry and Art. When the poet speaks the air seems filled with music, or beautiful visions pass before our eyes. When the musician and the painter charm us with their incantations we discover strange rhythmic thoughts nestling in our hearts. These are the antiphonal responses of Poetry and Art. The manifold forms which they assume are but strings of the same mighty instrument, and answer to each other.

And yet there are differences between the presentments of the poet and the painter real and distinct. Of these the most essential seems to lie in the almost prophetic vision of the poet. The painter is concerned only with the present or the past, the poet stands on

the threshold of the future with his face set towards the "Shall be,"—

> Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years shall yield;
> Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,
> And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
> Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;
> And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
> Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men:
> And he rather holds it better men should perish one by one,
> Than that earth should stand at gaze, like Joshua's moon in Ajalon!
> Not in vain the distance beckons. Forward, forward let us range:
> Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

But there is another spirit, and a calmer, in which the poet is for ever looking forward. On the wings of song we rise to see beyond the purple distance into the Land of Beulah. And sometimes, when the evening sun is passing like a chariot of fire through bars of golden light, we think of the gates of heaven and the great King entering in. And so it is for poetry to lift our eyes beyond the narrow bounds that hem us in, and to show us the Rest that is to come. Rest from the perils of life—rest from the bitterness of life—rest for

the overtasked body—rest for the overstrained intellect —rest for the bruised heart. From the strife that fills the world—from the struggles of ambition—from the fight for gold—from the cruel wars that drench our fields with blood—rest.

> Down the dark future through long generations
> The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease;
> And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,
> I hear the voice of Christ once more say "Peace."

This Rest is not ours yet; but we see the shadow of it in the face of Nature. And the poet was the first to perceive this; so that, while the painter was busy with the court, or camp, or church, he might be seen not seldom coming from the fields with the dew of heaven upon his garments. Thus Dante describes

> The heavenly forest dense with living green
> That tempered to the eyes the new-born day.

Thus Tasso:—

> How in the passing of our days doth pass
> The bud and blossom of the life of man!

And Chaucer:—

> When the sweet April showers
> The drought of March hath piercèd to the root
> And bathèd every vein.

Thus Spenser hears the angelical, soft, trembling voices of the birds in the "Wandering Islands:"—

Such as at once might not on living ground
Save in this paradise be heard elsewhere.

And Cowley, in his glorious "Hymn to Light:"—

The Violet, Spring's little infant, stands
Girt in thy purple swaddling bands.
A crimson garment in the rose thou wearest,
A crown of studded gold thou bearest:
The virgin lilies in their white
Are clad but with the lawn of almost naked light.

And above all, Milton, the Claude of Landscape Art in Poetry; and Shakespeare, who doth take the dew-drops—

To hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

And these are but echoes of the past, or rather they are like the first tremulous notes that break the stillness of the woods while yet the eastern hills are grey and the cornfields lie in the cool shadow of the lingering twilight. But they suffice to show how greatly the poet was in advance of the painter in Landscape Art. Raphael did indeed spare a little azure from the blue eyes of his maidens with which to paint the sky, and Titian some of the crimson of their garments for the setting sun. But the golden glory of their yellow, no! It may be doubted whether Dante, or Tasso, or Spenser, or Shakespeare ever looked upon a picture of a cornfield. Now, the poet and the painter work together, each mightily strengthening the other. Now,

Landscape has become a theme to be reverenced and trusted. Now, it is to be relegated no more to perpetual background, or used only in illustration of some other subject.

Not that it will be less used in illustration. The grandest, the sweetest similes will always be drawn from the face of Nature, as when Russell Lowell says of "Zekle," and the maiden he loved:—

> Along o' her his veins would run
> All crinkly, like curled maple;
> The side she brushed felt full of sun
> Ez a south slope in April.

Or as, in a higher school of Art, Tennyson says of Enid, when, rescued and reconciled, loyal and loving, and now once more knowing herself beloved, she clasped her hands beneath her husband's heart:—

> That never yet, since high in Paradise
> O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
> Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind.
> She did not weep,
> But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist,
> Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
> Before the useful trouble of the rain.

And as in these instances the passions of our lives are illustrated by similes drawn from Nature, so the poet will attribute to his Landscape associations that belong rather to sentient beings. Thus in describing Night, Gerald Massey says,—

Earth sparkling, bride-like bares her bosom to the
nestling Night,
Who hath come down in glory from the golden halls
of light.
Ten thousand tender, starry eyes smile o'er the world
at rest,
The weary world, hushed like an infant on its mother's
breast.
The great old hills lift up their foreheads in rich sleep-
ing light:
How humbly grand, how still they stand, worshipping
God to-night.
The flowers have hung their cups with gems of their
own sweetness wrought,
And muse and smile upon their stems in extasy of
thought.

Exquisite similes are these, but if Landscape Art begins with simile it does not end there. In the perpetual interchange between the world within us and the world around us there is infinite scope for the expression of passion, and in "Blessing the Cornfields" the poet need not doubt but that he will bless the reapers also. The central theme of Art is Life—the life of man; and the cornfields are incidental to it. Like the Tree of Life we stand in the midst of the garden. Around us are the lesser trees, also of the Lord's planting. Their boughs stretch out and mingle with our own, while amongst them gleam the white garments of the celestial visitants. Thus Landscape Art sees in creation the shadow of the lost Paradise, the promise of the Paradise to come.

But it does not exclude man from this paradise, it does not isolate itself from the deep emotions, the tender sympathies of our lives. Are not all these, indeed, very closely allied with the changing aspect of the natural world?

Take, for example, Turner's fine painting, in the Kensington Museum, "A Ship in Distress signalling for Help." How the storm drives! How the cruel waves hurl themselves against the vessel! How deep also the passion that it stirs! Its appeal is direct to all the tenderest emotions, all the compassionate sympathies of our nature. Yet it is pure Landscape Art. It does not show a line of the human face. Turner could not so paint a face that it should win our compassion, our reverence, or our love; but he could so place before our eyes rock and cloud, and sea and tempest, that we almost tremble as in the presence of Him who rideth upon the storm and walketh upon the wings of the wind.

Nor is this all: for while the Landscapist shares with the Dramatist the power of stirring the passions there is one respect in which Landscape Art has a force even beyond Dramatic.

The Dramatist shows us the rage of Hotspur, "all smarting with his wounds being cold—to be so pestered;" but *we* are not angry. He shows us Othello's doubt, but *we* are not doubtful for an in-

stant of the sweet Desdemona. We look on Hero's speechless despair, but we are ourselves all the while hopeful. We believe in Launce's affection for his dog "Crab," but we do not share it; we would rather that he wagged his tail elsewhere than within our doors.

But in Landscape Art the passions awakened are within us: they are our own: we are not witnesses but actors.

In illustration of this let us compare two passages in which the keynote is the same, the rush of an awakened memory.

The first is from Goethe's "Faust." Margaret has been betrayed: cruel temptation, sin, misery, madness have come upon her in quick succession. Now she lies chained within, and Faust is at the prison door—Mephistopheles still whispering in his ear "Haste! my horses shudder in the morning air." And Faust hears Margaret's cry, "hears the straw rustle and the fetters ring." He enters, but is unrecognised; the poor girl, crouching at his feet, cries,—

"Woe, woe is me, they come! O bitter death!"

And Faust,—

"Be still, be still, I come to set thee free!"

And Margaret—to whom all sounds are but the reverberations of the "Dies iræ"—to whom all sights are but the flashing of the sword that shall slay her,—

"Oh! pity me, and let me live!
"Thou comest for me at midnight's hour:
"Will daybreak not be time enough?
"So young, so young, and yet so soon to die!
"Torn is the garland!"

And Faust, abased now at her feet, cries, "Margaret! Margaret!" and she listens:—

"I heard him call: I'm free, I'm free!
"Unto his neck I'll fly,
"Upon his breast will lie."

And then, turning her beautiful wild eyes upon him —eyes that shall smile, as they meet his, no more for ever,—

"Thou must stay here, and I will show
"How all the graves prepared must be:
"My mother's place must be the best;
"Beside her shall my brother lie;
"A little from them let me rest,
"But only not too far away—
"Upon my breast my child must be!"

The parallel passage is from the "Princess:"—

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean;
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
And as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge:
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square ;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more—

Dear as remember'd kisses after death.

Observe how these passages are linked together. The passion of each lies in the rush of suddenly awakened memory. Margaret, in the strange darkness of her prison cell, hears the familiar voice of Faust, and the sweetness of love, the bitterness of death, her early innocence, her mother, her child, crowd upon her mind.

But this sorrow, these memories—they are not ours; they are not even Goethe's—they are Margaret's. Our faces may be wet with tears; but they are tears of pity, not the tears that would rain fast from Margaret's eyes.

But the memories that rush in upon us in looking on the happy Autumn fields are not another's—not even the poet's, at whose magic touch they come. They are our own. The friends whose faces are hid from us were our friends; the days which are no more were our days.

Landscape Art in Poetry is not however the exponent of the deep passions only. It can be full of sentiment, or satire, or even of fun and humour. And this without

for a moment transgressing against that fine sympathy with Nature which is the essence of true feeling alike in poet and in painter. As at times full of grave thought, or wrapped in contemplation, he holds deep converse with her, so to his most delicate or playful fancies she sends back a sweet echo. In this association of Nature with the imagination, the Landscape Poet has a power beyond that of the Painter. The Painter can indeed show us "the little copses climbing," or—

> Young ashes pirouetting down
> Coquetting with young beeches,
> The poplars in long order due,
> The shock-head willows two and two.

But he must lay down his palette in despair, and leave it altogether to the Laureate to tell such a tale as that of the "Talking Oak," a tree that "circled in the grain five hundred rings of years:" a tree that had listened so long to Walter's questioning about the sweet Olivia, that at last "it plagiarised a heart and answered with a voice." It tells Walter how Olive came to rest beneath its boughs, because it was there they had played together as children; how she kissed the name that he had carved there, and the tree says,—

> "A teardrop trembled from its source,
> And down my surface crept.
> My sense of touch is something coarse,
> But I believe she wept.

"And in a fit of frolic mirth,
She strove to span my waist:
Alas, I was so broad of girth,
I could not be embraced.

"I wish'd myself the fair young beech
That here beside me stands,
That round me, clasping each in each,
She might have lock'd her hands."

And as Olive sleeps beneath the mighty branches, the tree breathes on her eyes through all its summer leaves —and then lets slip a sunbeam like a golden butterfly to flutter round her lip—and at last, in a too great outburst of affection, drops an acorn on her breast.

"But in a pet she started up,
And pluck'd it out, and drew
My little oakling from the cup,
And flung him in the dew.

"I shook him down because he was
The finest on the tree.
He lies beside thee on the grass,
O kiss him once for me.

"O kiss him twice and thrice for me,
That have no lips to kiss,
For never yet was oak on lea
Shall grow so fair as this."

This power of associating the humorous with Landscape appears to be peculiar to the Poet. The same thing attempted by the painter could lead only to the grotesque. But space would fail me to tell of the many

aspects of Nature which can be interpreted to us only in poetry. There is one more, however, which must find an illustration here. The Painter, unless he resort to a series of pictures, can only select the one instant of supreme splendour; he can show nothing of the infinite gradations that lead to it, or the sudden changing from one glory to another. The Poet is not thus limited. Take for example the "Lighthouse," by Longfellow, and see how in a few lines these transitions or sudden changes can be expressed:—

Stedfast, serene, immovable, the same
  Year after year, through all the silent night
Burns on for evermore that quenchless flame,
  Shines on that inextinguishable light!

It sees the ocean to its bosom clasp
  The rocks and sea-sand with the kiss of peace;
It sees the wild waves lift it in their grasp,
  And hold it up, and shake it like a fleece.

The startled waves leap over it—the storm
  Smites it with all the scourges of the rain.

The sea-bird wheeling round it, with the din
  Of wings and winds and solitary cries,
Blinded and maddened by the light within
  Dashes himself against the glare, and dies.

These are only as folio sketches from Nature. But they represent a school of Landscape Art in Poetry not less marked in its characteristics, nor inferior in splendour to any of the schools that have made Art

a glory in the world. As to the great Landscapes of the poets, are they not known? The "Excursion," the "Seasons," the "Song of Hiawatha," "Childe Harold"—a splendid panorama in which the hero exists only to link together successive views of Italy and Greece, the Rhine, Switzerland, the Pyrenees, the Alps—these are some of the great pictures by the Landscape poets:—

> Skies, mountains, rivers, winds, lakes, lightnings, these
> With night, and clouds and thunder, and a soul
> To make these felt and feeling.

O yellow cornfields lying in the sun, already deepening into gold wherewith to crown the year! O vineyards purple as are the garments of a king! O Earth, white with the royal ermine of the snow—I charge thee keep the tender seed within thy bosom until the spring shall come to garland thee once more with flowers!

O poet, O painter, whose theme is the glory of Landscape Art, thou art within the King's Garden! There the King hath Himself walked. Until He come again I charge thee to reverence and love it for His sake!

There remains yet one more phase of the subject for our consideration, namely, its bearing on a question that has at all times divided the Art world. There are two theories by which the Painter may be guided in his work. Looking at the infinite varieties of the human

form as the accident of circumstance, and believing that Nature aimed at some unattained perfection of beauty, he may say, "Eye hath not seen it, but it is for me to strive to paint that which Nature has suggested." This is Idealism. On the other hand, tracing in these infinite variations from the original type design rather than accident, he may say, "I will be content to paint reverently that which my eyes have seen." This is Realism.

I am aware that no brief definition can cover the whole question. Perhaps it has never been more exquisitely unfolded than by Robert Browning in his "Fra Lippo Lippi." The Prior has given poor Lippo a bit of convent wall to paint, and the painter's "head being full" the wall is not very long a blank:—

> First, every sort of monk, the black and white
> I drew them, fat and lean; then, folks at church,
> From good old gossips, waiting to confess,
> To the breathless fellow at the altar foot,
> Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
> With the little children round him in a row
> Of admiration.

All this he paints, and much more, until the convent folks crowd round to see, and, being simple bodies, they praise loud.

> "That's the very man!
> "Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
> "That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
> "To care about his asthma: it's the life."

But then the Prior himself appears upon the scene—

> And stops all that in no time. "How? What's here?
> "Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
> "Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true
> "As much as pea and pea! It's devil's game!
> "Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
> "Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
> "She's just my niece—Herodias, I would say,
> "Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
> "Have it all out!"
> Now is this sense, I ask?
> A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
> So ill the eye can't stop there, must go further
> And can't fare worse! ——— Take the prettiest face,
> The Prior's niece—patron saint—is it so pretty
> You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
> Sorrow, or joy? Won't beauty go with these?
> Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
> If you get simple beauty, and nought else,
> You get about the best thing God invents:
> That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
> Within yourself, when you return Him thanks.

Poor Lippo, however, did not rub all out at the Prior's bidding. Some of his work stands now in the National Gallery to witness that four hundred years ago one painter at least strived to reconcile the Real and the Ideal.

But did he reconcile them? We know he did not. His works are marred by much that is gross; perhaps the evil passions that mastered his life mastered his art also.

Can they then be reconciled in Art? Since one

school has excelled in ideal truth, and another in realistic fidelity, an excellence is conceivable that should surpass both. But this excellence has not been attained. The question still lies before [illegible]

In the Landscape Art of Poetry, ho [illegible] ciliation is complete. Look at the realism [illegible] worth. He is entering London by the mail; it is [illegible] morning as the coach passes over the old bridge at Westminster:—

> Earth has not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty:
> This city now doth like a garment wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields and to the sky,
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
> Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
>
> The river glideth at his own sweet will.

This is intense Realism, yet it is grand by virtue of the lofty ideal that fills the poet's soul. It is in verse just what Fra Lippo cried out for:—

> "Paint things as they are,
> "God's works; paint any one, and count it a crime
> "To let a truth slip."

But see how another master in Landscape Art touches the same theme, Daybreak, as favourite a theme with the poet as with the painter:—

A wind came up out of the sea,
And said, "O mists, make room for me!"

It hailed the ships, and cried, "Sail on,
"Ye mariners, the night is gone."

And hurried landward far away,
Crying, "Awake! it is the day."

It said unto the forest, "Shout!
"Hang all your leafy banners out!"

It touched the wood-bird's folded wing,
And said, "O bird, awake and sing."

It whispered to the fields of corn,
"Bow down, and hail the coming morn."

It crossed the churchyard with a sigh,
And said, "Not yet! in quiet lie."

This is intense Idealism; it is in verse just what the old Prior insisted upon when he said,—

"Give us no more of body than shows soul:
"Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms."

and yet its very strength lies in the realistic fidelity to Nature of every touch.

And so the great controversy as to the Real and the Ideal is but one of the accidentals of Art. Nature is not divided, neither with her is there confusion. It is our apprehension of her only that is limited. The great masters of Classic and Mediæval Art have rendered their account of her in the Ideal, and now the Landscape painter claims to interpret her in Realism: the Realism that paints the still leaves on

the trees with tenderest detail of light and form and colour; the Realism that paints storm and driving mist or dazzling floods of light in masses quite textureless and almost formless to those who see not with the painter's watchful eyes.

It is thus that Art progresses. Not that Angelo excelled Phidias, or that Turner surpassed Raphael; not that the poets of our age write better than did the masters of the great schools. The disciple does not begin where the master ends. There is none that can take up the palette of Raphael after his too early death; and the hundred years of Titian did not suffice for him to impart his power to another. The poet or the painter dies, and—

> Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
> And burnèd is Apollo's golden bough.

And yet there is progress in Art. The Assyrian, with everything to concentrate his thoughts on war and human action, learned to depict the human form, while still utterly ignorant of Landscape Art. The Greek, absorbed in the realisation of ideal forms of beauty, and the Mediævalist in the realisation of the life of human passion, missed altogether any adequate conception of that other life, the life of Nature, where only we find beauty without sensuality, and passion without suffering or sin.

Thus the theme of Assyrian Art was Action; the

theme of Greek Art was Beauty; the theme of Mediæval Art was Passion: each school not copying its predecessor, but adding a new domain to the Empire of Art. If Greek Art limited itself to a few grand types of human beauty, and Mediæval Art added new types in heroism and saintly virtue, it remains for the Modern school to show that the theme of Art should be as limitless as is the splendour of the creation.

I have only to add that in Landscape Art the Poet and the Painter now stand side by side—no longer blinding each other's eyes by filling Nature with little gods, Apollos, Cupids, and Nymphs. Apollos, Cupids, and Nymphs might have inspired the Greek, but they came a thousand years too late when Claude put them into Italian landscape, or when Dryden, Cowley, or Spenser made them dance to English verse.

But if we dismiss this doubtful company have we anything better with which to fill their places? Better a thousand times, nobler and truer, as the living passion of our life—its love, its hopes, its fears, are more real than the dead sentimentality of their fictitious amours. We have seen that Nature is glorious for her own sake, without such adventitious aids. We have seen that in Landscape Art there is place for graceful imagination, for playful fancy, for sweetest, saddest memory, for deepest sympathy, for earnest

passion and grave thought. For in Landscape Art there is rest and peace and hope. Such peace as Milton found in thinking of the

> Insuperable height of loftiest shade,
> Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm.

Such hope as Dante must have known in dreaming of the Apple Tree again in blossom, with hues

> More than the rose, less than the violet.

Such rest as we may find every day in the King's Garden, which includes all the Cornfields that lie between the trees of the lost Paradise and the white rose of the Paradise to come.

SEEING THE INVISIBLE; OR,

THE USE OF THE SUPERNATURAL

IN ART.

I.

THE SONS OF GOD.

I TAKE in my hand a sheet of fair, white writing paper, and enter the studio of a photographer. Handing to him the paper I request that he will make me a photograph of it.

His surprise is natural, and I am prepared for the remonstrance, "But, sir, there is nothing on it to photograph."

"Be it so," I reply; "call it simply an experiment, but oblige me by performing it."

Accordingly the stainless sheet of paper is pinned against the wall; the camera is adjusted; and the plate, after an instant's exposure to "nothing," is duly carried off to that mysterious little dark room in which the lovers of this gentle craft delight.

Thus being for a few minutes left alone I take up a book that lies on the table; and somewhat idly turning the leaves I come upon these words, "When

the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Who were these sons of God, these stars of the morning? Perhaps they were a company of angels that came down to witness the beauty of the new created world. Perhaps—ah! we may wonder and question, but we cannot answer. And yet, still turning the leaves of the book, the fancy grows upon me until, linking thought to thought, I come upon another passage that seems the very record of their song.

And now the vision is complete before me. I can see them as they stand in shining ranks on the margin of the great sea. I can hear their voices as they cry, "Thou coveredst the deep as with a garment, the waters stand in the hills; at Thy rebuke they flee, at the voice of Thy thunder they are afraid." And now on mighty wings I see them pass over sea and strand and fruitful plain, until, reaching some great mountain range, the song is again raised, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap; even the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted; wherein the birds make their nests." And yet again, behold, as from the heights they see the wide horizon stretched before them and the sun sinking beyond the distant hills: "Thou makest darkness that it may be night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do move; the lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat from God; the sun ariseth, they haste them away

together and lay them down in their dens; man goeth forth to his labour."

"Man goeth forth to his labour." And so the vision fades from before me; the book is closed; the shining ranks are seen no more; I am again alone in the work-a-day world. It only remains for me to extract from my purse the price of my photograph of "nothing," and then—when suddenly a voice is heard from within the little room, "But, sir, there really is something!" And so it proves: the plate, in utter disregard of the old saw, that "out of nothing, nothing can come," is showing lively signs of chemical action, and in another minute the photographer places in my hands the image of the sheet of paper, on which are distinctly traced these words: "Seeing the Invisible."

"Seeing the Invisible"—it is a contradiction in terms. Yes, truly, and yet the expression is not without justification.

Let us consider it for a moment. We are all familiar with different methods of secret writing. As children we may have written what we were pleased to call mysterious messages, with milk—as innocent as ourselves—and then, holding them to the fire, have exulted to see them deepen into brown. But that is not seeing the invisible; it is making the writing visible in order that we may be able to see it. Here however the writing is unchanged; the paper from which the photograph

was taken lies before me now, fair and white still. If anything is written upon it the eye cannot discern it; it is invisible from first to last; and yet we not only know what is there but we see it with our eyes, and that by a process which leaves it still invisible.

"Seeing the Invisible." But how came the words there? That is a question so easily answered that I will leave it for a moment while I place side by side with it the greater question—Whence came that other vision which in an instant filled the dull waiting-room with light, and peopled it with celestial shapes? The sheet of white paper stares at me from the wall, but I do not see it, or it has become the first star that trembled over Paradise. The pages of a book rustle between my fingers, but I do not hear them—I hear only the rushing of mighty wings—and then—oh, the pity of it! The photographer can fix *his* image; he comes from the dark room into the daylight holding it in his hand. But I—the light fades from before me—the rush of wings is heard no more—the star dies out in the darkness—where is my vision?

Questions such as these crowd in upon the mind when we think of the nature of the poet's vision or the painter's dream. And it is that we may find some answer to them that I approach this subject.

And I approach it through these two types, the one

drawn from the material, the other from the spiritual world.

For it is the essential nature of Art to deal with both these worlds. Like the great angel of the Apocalypse, Art stands with one foot upon the earth, one foot upon the sea, its head encircled with a rainbow, and in its hand a book in which are words written. And the words written therein are the thoughts of men—about themselves; about the beautiful world in which they live; about Him who they say did make them in the ages past, and who they believe will judge them in the ages yet to come. So that Art is a record of the human mind; a witness of the evil and the good that we have done. But Art is more than a record; it is a camera, looking into which we can see the image of the soul; its aspirations after that which is good; its mighty passions; its conflict with evil; its agony when hurled back into darkness; its tremulous return to light. And like as it is a mirror of the soul, so Art is also a record and a witness of the glory of the natural creation. I have dared to call it the one universal language which has never been confounded. But Art does not speak to us about itself. If Nature has nothing to say to us Art must be eternally dumb.

Ah, but Nature does speak to us, whether we listen or not; and Poetry is not so much a cry in our ears as a momentary stilling of the roar of the world; Art

is not so much a forcing of strange sights upon our eyes as the lifting of a veil—that we may hear and see something of her hidden life.

> The thrushes sing,
> And shake our pulses and the elms' new leaves,
> Howsoe'er the world goes ill,
> The thrushes still sing in it.
> The skies, the clouds, the fields,
> The happy violets hiding from the roads
> The primroses run down to, carrying gold;
> The tangled hedgerows, where the cows push out
> Impatient horns and tolerant churning mouths
> 'Twixt dripping ash-boughs.
> Hills, vales, woods netted in a silver mist;
> A ripple of land; such little hills, the sky
> Can stoop to tenderly and the wheatfields climb.
> "See," I said,
> "And see! is God not with us on the earth?
> "And shall we put Him down?"

All this we *can* see for ourselves. We have but to lift our eyes, and lo! a sheet of white paper pinned to the wall—and upon it are words written which we cannot read—but the words are these: "Seeing the Invisible."

So I have done with the first type; but where is my vision?

In the pages of the poet; on the canvas of the painter; in the marble of the sculptor; in the fretted arch of the architect; in the sweet strains of the musician; in every splendour that Art can put on like beautiful garments. Dante and Milton; Angelo and

Raphael; Handel and Mozart, are not these also the sons of God? do not they also sing? is not their song a cry of joy? Where is my vision? "At least the thrushes sing, and shake our pulses; howsoe'er the world goes ill, the thrushes still sing in it." There is my vision—in heaven and earth. And it shall endure so long as the sea is His who made it; so long as He hath sons to sing His praise; so long as man goeth forth to his labour.

II.

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY.

WHO shall read these pages? Men, perhaps, with grave eyes, who will detect faults in every line, and yet, seeing that I am in earnest will not cast them hastily aside. Women, it may be, with kind eyes, who will impart to my words a grace from their own pure minds. Children, I hope, whose trustful eyes will see with mine for a little while, until, passing me in the race, they reach nearer to the light itself.

All this is hidden from me; and yet of one thing I am quite sure, namely, that every one who reads will give to "the Supernatural" a somewhat different meaning. Nor is it necessary for my purpose that it should be otherwise. There are some who think of it as the unseen agency of the Divine Being—the manifestation of His power *over* as well as *in* the universal laws of Nature. Others there are to whom it is only a name for phenomena that they cannot yet explain, but

hope to explain when Science has done its perfect work. Are there not many who dream about it as something half-mysterious, half-wicked, but quite delightful, that gives a charm to ghost stories if they are told nicely by a bright fireside?

It is the legend over again of the King's Messengers —Theology, Science, and Art; and perhaps, after all, we cannot thoroughly understand "the Supernatural" until we have heard what each one of these Messengers may have to tell us.

But "the Supernatural in Art" is a qualification of the subject less beset with difficulties, and more susceptible of definition. It is to the painter that unknown quantity which cannot be expressed in any terms of Art. Amongst the early Christian painters there was one, taken, like David, from the sheepfolds. What splendours the young Giotto must have witnessed through the long Italian summers—what revelations of glory through the starry nights that might make him think of the angel and the multitude of the heavenly host seen by those other shepherds, who also, thirteen hundred years before, had watched their flocks by night. And then, just think of it, amongst those shepherds might there not have been one, penetrated with the like love of nature, to whom the gold and azure of the Syrian skies would have been as dear as the same changes were to the Florentine? The meridian light

may have been all too dazzling for the pencil, but when the sun had gone down, when the after-glow had faded from the horizon and the stars came out, then!—and *that* star, that hangs in luminous glory over Bethlehem, shall he not paint it?

And if we could see the picture, what would it be like? And if Giotto painted it, how should he make that star differ from another star in glory? No doubt the definition is so far true. The Supernatural is, in this instance at least, an unknown quantity that cannot be expressed in any terms of Art.

Nor in this instance only. If we examine the works of the best period of Hellenic Art we shall find gods and men represented side by side, absolutely alike. Although the Supernatural was then the almost perpetual theme of Art, yet, guided by a knowledge more refined than that of the later schools, or by an unerring instinct in their apprehension of the beautiful, the Greek sculptors attempted nothing beyond the realisation of the highest types of natural beauty.

It was when Arms had given place to Art—Sparta to Athens—that the second Parthenon arose, the great cathedral of classic times. This temple was to Athens what St. Peter's is to Rome, what its Duomo is to Milan, what Notre Dame is to Paris. There, may have been heard the thunder of the voice of Pericles—there, the persuasive eloquence of Socrates; while upon

the walls were many sculptures, fresh from the hand of Phidias, friezes and metopes, representing in a wonderful series the apotheosis of the beautiful animal we call "man." From one of these I have selected a fragment in illustration of the subject. It is but a fragment only from the story that the great sculptor

has written in stone. In the story complete we see the battles of the Heroes—against the Amazons, who resist marriage, and against the Centaurs, the violators of women—both being alike enemies to the very *shekinah* of their religion—the incarnation of ideal beauty in the human form. We see the procession of the Panathenaic festival: youths hastening forwards, or curbing back their horses; the victors in the games in chariots; slaves fulfilling menial duties. We see the runners in

the torch-races, men and youths and boys. Then the magnates of the city, grave in aspect; then beautiful women with votive offerings or leading the bulls garlanded for sacrifice; then priests and boys carrying the sacred vestment; and last of all the gods, amongst whom are Hera and Zeus.

But from first to last we perceive nothing to differentiate the natural from the supernatural. The seated figure of Zeus might be that of a chief magistrate in council; the graceful Hera or Demeter might be sisters of the girls in the procession; the horses of Hyperion might be the chargers of the warriors or of the Amazons.

Contrast with this reticence of Classic Art the treatment of the Supernatural as we see it in the works of the Mediævalists, where this unknown quantity, which cannot be legitimately expressed, is by any means and every means attempted to be implied. The nimbus round the head, varying in colour and design according to the dignity of the sacred character; the wings of the angels, which *must* be anatomically false; and above all, the curious expedient of representing the saints as of a larger size than that of the other figures in a group.

The outline on the opposite page is from a panel in the *Châsse* of St. Ursula, preserved in the *Hospice S. Jean* at Bruges, one of the most precious relics of

the Renascence. It is the work of Hemling, and represents the saint as the protector of the maidens who

were her companions. I have selected this rather than a grosser example because it is my purpose to illustrate rather than to deride; and the sweet innocence of the girlish figure protects it from rude criticism. But the application of the principle of following the canonisation of an individual by a corresponding enlargement of the person is occasionally attended with results less fortunate than in this case. Not seldom does a sweet girl-saint appear with a dozen greybeards peeping out from the folds of her garments, or with a company of mitred ecclesiastics grouped around her—as the little children crowd around a favourite teacher in a Sunday-school not knowing that she also is perhaps a saint.

Of such expedients we may at the least affirm that they do not tend to the elevation of Art. Perhaps it is as true of the Artist as it is of the Philosopher and of the Divine, that he cannot predicate too little of the unknown.

For consider to what such symbolism will lead. If beauty of form and truth of drawing are to be abandoned for a supposed sacred purpose, it will inevitably follow that the deviation from truth and beauty will be required first of all in the very figures which are to be especially reverenced. The accessories will be allowed to retain their normal conditions—there is nothing supernatural about them. But will the accessories

consent to retain their normal conditions? Ah! not so. The knowledge of what is beautiful, and the power of drawing truthfully from nature, are not to be attained by the half-hearted labour given to accessories. The painter who begins by dethroning Beauty and Truth need not be surprised if they refuse to wait upon him as his servants. At first relegated to the background, they will presently slip out of his canvas altogether, and the painter will find himself alone, with nothing but his own inventions to stare him in the face. In other words, the law of Art will become—that all things shall be ugly—and the more ugly the more divine.

The drawing on the following page can have no other history than this; and I have chosen it as a type of the degradation that may be reached through such treacherous dealing with truth. It is a facsimile of one from a multitude of engravings in an old Prayer-book now lying before me, and is supposed to represent the Eye of Providence guarding our land from the perils of Gunpowder Treason. If the expedients of the Mediævalists were not elevating to Art, surely this is not exalting to Religion. And yet, not profanely was it drawn, nor without a reasonable hope that it would be a solace and support to the Christian in his devotions would the compiler of this Prayer-book have issued it from the press. The date of the title-page, however,

coincides curiously with that of the founding of the Royal Academy a century ago. It may be that the time had come for our nation to learn to spell out

something of the Message of Art, in which the Natural comes before the Supernatural. It must be that when we have learned more patiently what all the King's Messengers may have to tell us, we shall find that at least they never contradict each other.

We have so far been considering the representation of the Supernatural only in its higher forms, and within the limits of the works of the Painter or the Sculptor. It is, however, the glory of Art that if one avenue is closed against it another shall lie open, through which we may pass from the seen to the unseen. That which the Painter or the Sculptor cannot interpret is made clear by the Poet.

And yet, even to the Poet, there is a limit which cannot be transgressed with safety. We shall see presently what infinite scope there is in Poetry for the use of the Supernatural—especially in its more subtle and tender character of an invisible, spiritual presence. But the moment this "presence" crystallises into the "spectral," Art—whether represented by poetry or painting—is brought face to face with the supreme difficulty of translating into shape and colour that which should take shape and colour only from the mind by which it is apprehended.

I know, indeed, that ghosts figure rather largely in the pages of the poet, even where they take the dramatic form. Has not our great Shakespeare sanctioned this use of the Supernatural in Art, and hallowed it with thoughts "beyond the reaches of the soul"? Nevertheless, it is one of those perilous adventures that can be justified only by success.

There is, perhaps, no finer example of the splendid

Art with which this difficulty has been met than in Macaulay's "Battle of the Lake Regillus;" and I refer to it because, side by side with the sketch of the fragment from the Parthenon, it brings out with singular force the essential difference between pictorial and descriptive Art in the use of the Supernatural.

The outline of the story is very simple. The armies of thirty cities have come forth to fight against Rome for the restoration of the Tarquins; the armies of the Commonwealth are discouraged and wavering, when suddenly the Twin-Gods—Castor and Pollux—appear, and charging at the head of the legions of Rome, lead them to victory.

This then is the subject of the poem—the supernatural force of these celestial horsemen. But incidental to it and parallel with it runs the story of human passion and natural life. How, then, shall these celestial chargers be made to differ from "Black Auster," the favourite horse of Herminius, or from the grey charger of Mamilius? Let us read for a few lines. The battle is still raging—Mamilius and Herminius are both struck from their horses and lie dead upon the field; then—

Fast, fast, with heels wild spurning,
The dark-grey charger fled:
He burst through ranks of fighting men;
He sprang o'er heaps of dead.

His bridle far out-streaming,
  His flanks all blood and foam—
He sought the southern mountains,
  The mountains of his home.
The pass was steep and rugged,
  The wolves they howled and whined ;
But he ran like a whirlwind up the pass,
  And he left the wolves behind.
Through many a startled hamlet
  Thundered his flying feet ;
He rushed through the gate of Tusculum,
  He rushed up the long, white street ;
He rushed by tower and temple,
  And paused not from his race,
Till he stood before his master's door
  In the stately market-place.

But, like a graven image,
  Black Auster kept his place,
And ever wistfully he looked
  Into his master's face.

How shall Art go beyond this? What words are left with which to describe the celestial chargers? And the gods—we have not seen them yet. But the pathos of it—the passion of it—can they be surpassed? I think not; but therein lies the secret of the strength with which Art shall rise to its task. By the simple effect of calm. By the passionate splendour of force, resistless and yet silent. There is no more the thunder of flying feet—the gods are swift, but they make no noise. Crimsoned with blood—yes! but it is the blood of their slain. See, they come—amidst the

roar of battle, that rises to heaven like the roar of a burning forest—they come;—

White as snow their armour was;
  Their steeds were white as snow.
Never on earthly anvil
  Did such rare armour gleam:
And never did such gallant steeds
  Drink of an earthly stream.

And all who saw them trembled,
  And pale grew every cheek;
And Aulus, the Dictator,
  Scarce gathered voice to speak.
And on the thirty armies
  Came wonder and affright,
And Ardea wavered on the left,
  And Cora on the right.
"Let no man stop to plunder,
  "But slay, and slay, and slay;
"The gods who live for ever
  "Are on our side to-day.

From beginning to end the poem is a succession of splendours which I dare not stay to cite. But it is most interesting to observe the singular parallelism that is wrought out in it—in the simplest manner and yet with the greatest care—by which the natural and supernatural are made to act and re-act upon each other. First the two men, Herminius and Mamilius; then the Twin-Gods, Castor and Pollux. First the favourite horses of the warriors; then the celestial chargers. First the mad career of the affrighted steed; then the silent but resistless march of the

avengers crimsoned with blood. First the pale faces of the trembling crowd, as they gather in the market-place to hear only of disaster; then the waiting and the watching at the gates of Rome:—

Young lads and stooping elders
That might not bear the mail,
Matrons with lips that quivered,
And maids with faces pale.
Since the first gleam of daylight
Sempronius had not ceased
To listen for the rushing
Of horse-hoofs from the east.
The mist of eve was rising,
The sun was hastening down,
When they were aware of a princely pair
Fast pricking towards the town.
So like they were, no mortal
Saw twins so like before;
Red with gore their armour was,
Their steeds were red with gore.

Then burst from that great concourse
A shout that shook the towers;
And some ran north and some ran south,
Crying "The day is ours!"
But on rode those strange horsemen—
They rode to Vesta's door;
Then, like a blast, away they passed,
And no man saw them more.

The poem is English, the legend is Roman; and yet a fragment of Greek sculpture, and that designed to tell a different story, is perhaps the highest rendering of it in Art that the world has ever seen. The highest

because the truest. Before he had reached the immortals, the sculptor had reached the limit of his Art—which has but one and the same symbol for gods and men. What may lie beyond this limit we cannot tell. We know only that our ultimate conception of beauty is the human form, and that if a superior intelligence assumes this form it will not be to degrade it. Amongst the friends of Phidias were two philosophers, who differed in their teaching as widely as men differ in their teaching now. The one affirmed that the Supreme Being is a Spirit, working through the visible creation, governing us for our good, but Himself invisible. The other affirmed that of the gods we know nothing. Which did the sculptor believe? Again, we cannot tell. We know only that that which he could not express in any terms of Art he was content to leave as an unknown quantity.

III.

MEN AND ANGELS.

THERE can be no doubt that the representation of celestial agency is legitimate in Art. From the time of Æschylus the dramatist to the time of Claude the painter there is scarcely an artist or a poet who has not made the gods his theme.

It is true indeed that Æschylus made them so terrible, that when his plays were acted women swooned in the theatre, and children died of sudden fright. It is true that Claude ornamented his landscapes with them, dotting them about, in the clouds, under the trees, in such a manner as to suggest no fear at all, except perhaps a gentle misgiving lest in their very slight attire they should take cold. But it is true also that during the two thousand years that lie between the lives of these men the Supernatural in every form has filled the canvas of the painter and the pages of the poet—filled them with visions of un-

dying beauty, with deeds of noble heroism, with passion the most tender and exalted.

And this, not amongst the Hellenic or Latin races alone, but amongst the rude tribes of the North and the mystic Dualists of the East. It is most interesting to trace back the myths of many nations to their common source, and to see how differently the same thought has been manifested, has been developed, has been changed through the varying influences of climate, of national life, or of personal temperament. Wide as is this subject it is necessary for me to refer to it for a moment, if only to point out how, always and everywhere in Art, if there is passion, if there is pathos, it is the passion and the pathos, not of the immortals, but of our lives. The Osiris of the Egyptians is indeed a suffering and a dying god; but it is as a man that he suffers and dies—slain by his brother's hand. If our eyes are blinded with tears as we look upon Calvary, it is not in any sense that we compassionate the Deity. That we might give our sympathy — therefore He became "the Man of Sorrows." And what is true of the greater is true also of the less. We may tremble in the presence of an angel, but we do not weep. There is in the gallery of the Louvre a bas-relief of the best period of Greek Art. It represents Orpheus, Eurydice, and Hermes—three figures only, but are they not a type of all that has been and shall be for ever—a man,

a woman, and a god? * Eurydice has stretched out her hand—if she may but touch her husband! Oh, the infinite tenderness of that touch! Orpheus has turned but for an instant to the dear face, and already "the Inexorable" has laid his hand upon hers. There is no resistance, but there is sadness indescribable. There is no confusion; there is no hope; there can be no delay. The beautiful vision shall dissolve again into the tenebræ of Hades; Orpheus shall go forth once more alone to cry "Eurydice! Eurydice!"

Again I say the pathos of it, the passion of it, lies altogether in its humanity. The god Hermes is there —he is necessary to complete the story—but he will go back to Mount Olympus, and we shall forget him; while those two, looking into each other's eyes for the last time, when shall they be forgotten?

It is only with thoughts such as these that I can in some measure account for the fact that one of the grandest poems in our language is also one of the least read amongst us. How few there are who have ever read "Paradise Lost"—the book which perhaps more than any other has given to our language the sweet-

* M. Charles Blanc, in his "Grammaire des Arts du Dessin" commenting for a different purpose on the same bas-relief, of which he gives a finely drawn illustration, says: "Puissance mystérieuse de l'art! Voilà un dieu, une femme, un poëte." I cannot but think that M. Blanc loses something of the full force of the thought by thus limiting the typical character of Orpheus.

ness and power of number. I do not mean glanced at it, but really *read* it, as they have read "Lalla Rookh," or the "Idylls of the King," or a play of Shakespeare's. I have never met a German who has not read his "Faust," or an Italian who knew nothing of the "Divina Commedia." Do Milton's angels stand with flaming swords to keep us from entering his Eden? It is not because it is full of the Supernatural that the great epic has become a closed book to us. Homer and Dante and Goethe are as full of these visions of the unseen world. It is because in Milton the Supernatural is isolated from us—it is a thing apart from the passion of our lives. The River of Life lies so very close to our feet, and it stands "at the other side," as Satan stood, when—

> Like Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved:
> His stature reached the sky, and on his crest
> Sat horror plumed.

In the Iliad, although the gods interpose, yet it is men who fight, and suffer, and die. It is Hector who at the chariot-wheels of Achilles is dragged through the bloody field to the rushing river. It is the beloved wife upon whom "a sudden darkness falls, blinding her swimming eyes." The Divine Comedy, again, takes us through Hell and Heaven. But whether we look upon the torments of the damned, or the glory of the blessed; whether we are in the presence of Lucifer or

stand before the Throne of God, we hear one voice, we think of one theme—the voice is that of Dante, the theme is Beatrice. And once more, in the drama of the great German the man who is tempted, the woman who is betrayed, may be living in the next street to us; we may have seen their faces to-day in the busy crowd.

But it is not thus with Milton. His record of the Supernatural is a record of another world—a world peopled with beings whom we know not. Satan does indeed carry both shield and spear; but they are not turned towards us, nor towards any of our race. They are an affair for Michael the Archangel.

And then, as to these Angels and Archangels. Separated as they are from us by the impassable barrier of immunity from suffering, they are yet so like ourselves in the lesser attributes of our nature that we grow familiar with them, with the familiarity rather of acquaintance than of love. They speak "in pleasant vein"—or "in gamesome mood"—or "with contracted brow." They go to rest at night as we do, and get up in the morning. They move "to the Dorian mood, of flutes and soft recorders." Questioned about their love affairs they blush, as might a timid girl. It is the Archangel Raphael whose face thus "glows celestial rosy red, love's proper hue." We are surprised to hear it, but we are not moved; perhaps the certainty that

in his case the course of true love surely must run smooth lessens our interest in his story. And then the "affable Archangel"—we pause—we look back—is it a misprint for Archbishop? No; "the affable Archangel" soft replies,—

"Let it suffice thee that thou knowest
"Us happy, and without love no happiness."

How different are the Angels of the Trilogy.* We feel no strange sense of familiarity as they pass before

* It is with the greatest hesitation that I send to the press this estimate of the comparative beauty of Dante's and Milton's descriptions of the angels, traversing as it does the opinion of so great a critic as Lord Macaulay. And yet there would be an end to criticism altogether if men followed blindly the lead even of such writers as the one from whom I have ventured to differ. Lord Macaulay, in his "Essay on Milton" (London, 1854, vol. i. p. 12), says: "Dante's angels are good men with wings. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and dæmons without any emotions of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company." And again in the same Essay: "Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet, austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates?" With regard to the first comment, I cannot reconcile it with the descriptions I have already cited, never having taken supper with "a Star, casting forth quivering beams"—or with a "May morning," or with any being that could bear the slightest resemblance to the "Angel with the rod." As to the latter criticism, it is quite pointless when we remember that it was an essential part of the great poet's design to retain the womanhood of Beatrice. In one passage he says expressly of her,—

La bella donna mossesi, e a Stazio
Donnescamente disse. (Pur. xxxiii. 134.)

us. The face of one is like the Morning Star, casting forth quivering beams. Another is of a lustre so divine that the eyes of Dante are oppressed before he knows what is approaching. Another affects the senses like the fragrance of a May morning.

These are similitudes untouched by the frailty of our nature, and so we can conceive of them as appertaining to the angelic host. But Dante's reference to the Angels are by no means limited to similitudes—he also clothes them with spectral splendours.

There is a light seen far off upon the sea. It is the Celestial Pilot. How swiftly he comes, unfolding on every side "I know not what of white," until the cry goes forth, "Behold the Angel of God! fold up thy hands." The white splendours are his wings. And yet once more:—

> There came across the waves
> The clangour of a sound with terror fraught,
> Such that the margin of the river trembled:
> As a whirlwind smites the forest, and bears away
> Wild beast and flock and shepherd,—from his face
> Fled more than a thousand souls, banished from heaven.
> Ah, how disdainful he appeared to me!
> He reached the gate, and with a little rod
> He opened it, for there was no resistance;
> Then he returned along the tenebrous road,
> And spake no word to us, but had the look
> Of one whom other thoughts constrain.

Both Dante and Milton are a little curious in Angel-lore, and when Art becomes curious it ceases to touch

the affections. Thus, the same Archangel who blushed so prettily when Adam indiscreetly pressed him about his love affairs, gives an account of the artillery used by the rebel host. His description however awakens in us no sense of terror, or even of reverence. The utmost we can feel is an antiquarian interest about such old-fashioned cannon, with perhaps a passing thought, that surely the poet never intended to suggest, as to what would have been the result if the rebel angels had possessed better guns. According to Milton this dreadful artillery of Hell consisted of half a dozen pieces of wood, like pillars, but hollowed out and laid on wheels. Of course Milton could not be expected to describe an Armstrong gun or a mitrailleuse. But it is no matter, these make noise enough to frighten timid angels, and smoke enough "to obscure all heaven."

> Disgorging foul
> Their devilish glut, chain'd thunderbolts, and hail
> Of iron globes.
> Down they fell
> By thousands, angel on archangel rolled,
> The sooner for their arms.

After all then it is doubtful whether conical shot or steel bullets could have been more effective.

But is it not a little unseemly—is it not even a little dangerous, this use in Art of supernatural cannon and chain-shot? It is true that Milton was drawing altogether on his imagination. He had not himself

witnessed this conflict, or his words might have been more like the words of *One who had seen it*, and who was content to say, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

But when the great author of "Paradise Lost" deigns to forget this strange artillery—when he has done with the "affable Archangel," and turns to the simple story of human life, how tender, how true, how almost divine are his conceptions! With what mighty force his measured words march on, carrying our hearts with them! Lo! it is Eve,—

> On she came,
> Led by her heavenly Maker.
> Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye.

Hark! it is the cry of the man, as he receives her from the hand of God:—

> "Giver of all things fair, but fairest this
> "Of all Thy gifts."

Or, once more, see them—

> Imparadised in one another's arms,
> The happier Eden.

And, last of all, when he runs on before to awaken her, for she lies sleeping, that at least they may go out of Paradise together. Before them blazed the sword of God:—

> They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld
> Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,

Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest.
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

Again then we see that if in Art there is pathos, if there is passion, it is the pathos and the passion of our lives. The Angels are there—they are necessary to complete the story. The story ended they return to surround the Eternal Throne and we see them no more. But those two, looking into each other's eyes as they go forth to seek a new home—does not our heart go with them?

This then is the central theme of Art—life, the life of man; and the Supernatural is only incidental to it. Like the Tree of Life we stand in the midst of the garden. Around us are the lesser trees, also of the Lord's planting. Their boughs stretch out and mingle with ours; while amongst them gleam the white garments of the celestial visitants.

And observe—this placing of the Supernatural does not take from its value, but adds to it immeasurably. Instead of an isolated phenomenon it becomes a pervading presence, always bending over us, as the inanimate creation is always reaching up to us. It is thus that Rossetti says of a pure maiden:—

So held she through her girlhood; as it were
An angel-watered lily, that near God
Grows and is quiet.

Thus George Wilson, in his song of the "Building of the Lighthouse:"—

Then said the sea, "God gave to me,
"His child, the land to win."

And the builder's cry in answer:—

"But God gave us both land and sea—
"We are His next of kin."

And once more, the Master of Song, who, whether in the use of the Natural or the Supernatural, is the greatest of them all:—

Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlayed with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.

And this ever-recurring reference to the Supernatural is not peculiar to sacred themes. It is like a golden thread running through all life—a golden link binding together the humblest and the most exalted. How shall I illustrate this necessity in Art of breaking through the prison-walls of the "material" to get at the glory on the other side? How shall I find a theme that shall be known to every one who shall read these pages—that shall be wholly secular, and that shall touch only the lowliest incidents of life?

I find such a theme in the "Village Blacksmith." What place is there here for the Supernatural? See the Realism of it—the dust and heat and blackness of the forge; and then the man himself,—

> With large and sinewy hands,
> And the muscles of his brawny arms
> Are strong as iron bands.
> His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
> His face is like the tan.

No doubt it is a picture drawn from real life. Let us analyse it for a moment.

> You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
> With measured beat and slow,
> Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
> When the evening sun is low.

And in an instant we see the soft shadows of twilight as they fall around us. But what magic spell has the poet wrought? We see more than the falling of the evening shadows. Through them we see the coming of the eternal night of rest that shall close the patient toil of life. But we see also the eternal renewing of life:—

> The children coming home from school,
> Look in at the open door;
> They love to see the flaming forge,
> And hear the bellows roar,
> And catch the burning sparks that fly
> Like chaff from a threshing floor.

And so the vision grows. For in the next verse the children are *his* children:—

He hears his daughter's voice,
Singing in the village choir.

The toil of the week ended, and in its stead—rest. The roar of the forge ceased, and in its place the sweet voice of his child. What more shall he ask? What more can the poet give? Listen—

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise.

Again—Seeing the Invisible.

IV.

THE SON OF MAN.

BUT if the Supernatural in Art finds its most tender expression when associated with our daily life, it is when it appears in the beautiful garments of religious symbol that it assumes its supreme splendour, and at the same time that it incurs the extremest risk.

So long as Art is true to its legitimate purpose, the setting forth of the glory of the creation, so long its association with a true religion cannot but purify and strengthen and elevate—purging it from its contact with evil, strengthening it with the passion of human life, lifting it to the contemplation of the life Divine.

But the moment that Art ceases to reflect, and assumes to partake of the Divine nature—it dies. Arrayed in royal robes it may be—but it dies. Sitting upon a throne it may be—but it dies. It dies as Herod died, even while the people are yet shouting that it is a god.

How indeed could it be otherwise? It is impossible

at the same time to recognise the true glory of a work of Art, and to attribute to it a Supernatural origin. That which is a representation cannot be also the thing itself. The antique statues which we so highly prize as works of Art were made to adorn the temples of the gods; but they were not worshipped. It is not in the study of High Art that men become idolaters. It was just when Greek Art culminated in these beautiful statues that Socrates was leading his disciples to think of the higher life and of the spiritual nature of the Divine Being. It was just when Raphael and Correggio and Da Vinci were filling the world once more with beauty that the Reformation burst forth in Europe. And it is just in those countries where there are *living* Schools of Art that Art is least used for superstitious purposes.

In the days of Phidias, as in the days of Angelo, men knew very well whence their statues came—from the studios of their artists. Art was already in its decadence when the images became seized with the strange habit of falling down from heaven. Whether this decadence led to, or was the result of a superstitious use of Art, is another question; but it is of vital moment to the lovers of Art to know that Superstition and High Art cannot exist together. Either the Art must become so debased that there shall be no glory in it for the Artist to inherit, or the people

must become so brutish that they cannot recognise the hand of a genius. Where is the image of the great goddess Diana of the Ephesians, for whom Demetrius made silver shrines?—an image so monstrously deformed that we should hesitate to place it even in a museum? Or take the Black Virgin of Ypres, of

which I have given a sketch in the margin, to which pilgrimages are made from all parts of the world. Strip it of its jewelled vestments and its crown, and what shall you see? These are the images which men worship: but works of High Art, never! These are the statues which fell down from heaven! Did they? If so, it is a matter for grave wonder that the sculptors up there were not better skilled in their craft. There is no artist among men who would acknowledge them as his work. They must have been cast out because they were so ugly. But is there in the wide world an example of a master-piece in Art to which any supernatural virtue is ascribed? I know of none. And yet it is not that Art cannot, or ought not, to touch such themes. There are pictures of the Blessed Mother so pure, so tender, so exalted, that we *cannot* worship them—we cannot, because they are true—true, that is, to our highest conception of womanhood. These paintings work no miracles; to them no prayer is made; in their honour no sacred rites are performed; we can only look upon them, and thank God that such men as Raphael and Angelo have lived to paint them.

But as Art cannot suffer from its contact with true Religion, so Religion cannot be blasphemed by true Art. And yet what strange distinctions have been drawn, by the scholastic theology which too often

usurps the place of real religion, with regard to the use of Art for religious purposes. For example, the Latin Church sanctions the use of images and pictures; while the Greek Church condemns the image as an idol, but carries the picture in solemn procession. A nice distinction this, and one that to simple minds seems something like the splitting of straws. But let us look at home. We flatter ourselves that we have cleansed the temple of God because we have cast out both statuary and painting. But is it so? Are these the only forms in which Art can give a false presentment of the Divine Being? I think not. A danger lies before us also, I will not say greater than that against which we rightly guard, but a danger all the more real because we take no heed of it at all.

I refer to the freedom with which the Poet does that which is forbidden to the Painter or the Sculptor. The Sculptor is not to bring his crucifix into our churches, although it is a simple record of a fact. The Painter is not to show us the Master walking upon the waters, though the waves be painted from the Lake of Galilee, and the face from the real likeness of the Master Himself. But the Poet—yes! He may picture for us a Being clothed with what he conceives to be the attributes of God, and casting it into verse—not a picture, not an image, that were idolatry—but into the form of

verse, he may then present it before us for our actual worship. It is not alone in ivory, or silver, or stone, or wood, that images can be made. Shakespeare created King Lear, yet he was not a sculptor. It is not alone on canvas that untrue or incomplete representations of the Deity can be given, but in hymns, and prayers, and sermons, and creeds; in any and every form of Art, of which words are the manifestation. This is a danger real, and close upon us. How much has Art to answer for in this, the commonest use of the Supernatural. How many are there who think that they have cast away God, while they have really never seen Him, but seen only some strange presentment of Him through the distorted imagination of an enthusiast. It is said to have been a favourite expression of Strauss in commencing a demonstration, "I will now proceed to construct God." The words appal us with the savagery of their assault upon the citadel of our faith. Yet what are they but the repetition in the lecture-room of that which our great Poets and Divines have always done unchallenged? Is it for an Alexandrian Bishop only to define the Deity?—or for an English Puritan to portray the "Eternal Father"? But were these words used only in derision, or had they a deeper meaning, namely, that anything which man can construct cannot by any possibility be Divine? If the Professor had been content to hold before our eyes

some Pasht from India, or some Bambino from Italy, his satire would, for Englishmen at least, have fallen pointless. Its sting for us lies altogether in this, that in his "construction" he used only—words.

Nor is this all; for while the verbal presentment which we sanction is inevitably false, because it is an anthropomorphic rendering of that which is not human but supernatural and infinite, the material presentment which we condemn is true as far as it goes. True, because it deals with the real likeness of a real man. Our knowledge of the face of Christ is not the result of the genius of a Raphael, or a Correggio, or a Da Vinci. The "Ecce Homo" of Correggio is indeed almost terrible in the depth and tenderness of its passion. The central figure in Da Vinci's great picture at Milan is awful in its suggestive splendour. The representations of our Lord in the cartoons of Raphael are the admiration of the world for their serene beauty. But more than a thousand years before these men pondered over it—while the Heathen were still raging, and the Kings taking counsel together—this likeness of the Master was known and treasured. The accompanying sketch is from one of the very earliest of these likenesses. It is from a fresco in the catacombs at Rome, and there is little doubt but that it was painted by one who had himself seen Christ. The

evidence is overwhelming that the early Christians were not less careful to treasure the likeness of the Master than were the Romans to keep the likeness of the Cæsar to whom He rendered tribute. In taking our nature upon Him, the Master gave us the right to look upon His face.

And yet the commandment stands. Let us see to it

that we do not transgress. He who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever will not be worshipped through an image, even though it be an image of Himself.

And yet the right remains. Let us see to it, lest, in refusing to look upon His face, we deny Him as the Son of man.

But the higher the subject-matter may be with which Art has to deal, the greater is the peril of any deviation from the truth. Perhaps in giving us this likeness of Himself, while still forbidding us to worship Him through any image, it is the will of Christ tnat we should take Him to live with us, not upon our altars, but within our homes. It is quite certain that if any idolatrous use has been made of this likeness, such use has always been associated with the false representation rather than with the true. It is not the "Ecce Homo" in our National Gallery, or the beautiful head that sanctifies our dwelling-house, that has stood between us and God. They only win from us, and for us, a few happy moments of love and reverence towards One who is too often absent from our thoughts. It is around the crucifix that all the superstitious uses of Art are crowded. And observe, in the former case the representation is true; in the latter it is historically and physically false. Physically false, because it is im-

possible for the pierced feet and tender hands to sustain, with calm outstretched arms, the weight that would drag down the body in intolerable anguish. Historically false, because Christ did not mock us, as Shelley suggests, by the appearance only of suffering. In vain do we look with wistful eyes towards Palestine; a few miles of surf breaking upon our English coast is all that we can see. In vain do we turn to the files of our oldest journals; like a chain snapped close to our hands they fail us here. There were no correspondents of the press to send sketches of the events that were then transpiring beyond the blue waters of the Mediterranean. There were no statues erected to His honour by an admiring public; there were no coins bearing His superscription; only His friends, as we have seen, cared to preserve the likeness of their Master. And, without exception, these representations of Christ are representations not of His humiliation, but of His glory. It is Christ turning the water into wine: it is Christ blessing the bread: it is Christ raising Lazarus. But Christ upon the cross—not that, anything but that. We have no true picture of our Lord in His last agony.* The earliest known representation of the

* The drawing on page 183 is from a metal image preserved in the Bibliotheca of the Vatican. For this, as well as for the outline on page 179, I am indebted to my friend the late Mr. Thomas Heaphy, whose great work on the Verisimilitude of the Received Likeness of our Blessed Lord, is now in the press.

Crucifixion, except indeed an intentional caricature, is the one of which I have given a sketch. It is of the sixth century, so that for half a millennium at least the followers of Christ were content to leave to Pagan hands the pictorial record of His sufferings. That which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and their hands had handled, they never tired of declaring unto men; and they declared it not by word of mouth only, but by the pencil also, in every form of tender remembrance of the dear Face they had loved. So, upon their sacramental vessels they engraved the Likeness. So, when they lay down for their last sleep they placed it on their breast. So, when the darkness fell upon the bloody arena they would gather the torn fragments of His martyrs and carry them to some quiet resting-place in the catacombs where His face, painted upon the wall, might overshadow them. And later, when they could serve Him without fear, and build churches to His praise, in fresco and mosaic they still declared that which they had seen. And yet there lay beyond the reach of Art the unknown quantity which was from the beginning. The Manhood they could paint, but the Godhead, never! Amongst the early Christians the image of Christ was never used in religious ceremonial. He whom they adored was not God apart from Man, nor Man apart from God, but One—Christ. And this, Art could never give. So

that when men wearied of the simplicity of a purely spiritual worship, and turned to the splendour of ritual for aid in their devotions, they demanded too much of Art. Art knew Christ only as the Son of Man, but the

image they desired to place upon their altars must be the Son of God. What could the painter do? The very purpose of his work, and the spirit of reverence with which he would approach it, would impel him to give to it all the majesty of which he deemed it worthy.

How should the Master be differentiated from the malefactors except by the awful serenity of voluntary endurance? How should the Divinity of the Crucified be manifested except by the conquest of material forces? And so, through the attempt to paint a creed instead of a fact, Art became untrue both to the natural and to the supernatural. For the Divinity of Christ when He lived amongst men was not visible. Had men seen it they could not have taken Him with wicked hands. Even his mother knew not that He was God. He hung upon the cross as did those who suffered with Him. And Art had to choose between representing Him thus, or—an untruth. In choosing the untruth Art became degraded and ready to help Religion with the lie that it held in its right hand. But Religion is not to be served by a lie any more than is Art; and in accepting the alliance it became degraded too. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! it is not thou only that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee. What, through the eighteen centuries, have we done with the likeness of the Master? It is too late now to ask whether the beautiful untruths to which men kneel have grown out of what seemed to be innocent love and holy adoration. It may be so—for it was not an enemy that did Him this dishonour. And yet the ruthless caricature traced by the cruel hands that scourged Him gave not so deep a wound as that which He

received in the house of His friends when the worship of Christ changed into the worship of the crucifix.

And the hurt of the wound is not to Him alone, but through Him it reaches even to ourselves. Our right to look upon the Master's face, like every other right that we inherit, has by the shame of its abuse left us at times almost at our wits' end to discern where the right ceases and the wrong begins. Think for a moment of the story of the Christ of Andernach. It was a stormy night, and a poor, sinful creature was wandering about the streets with her babe in her arms. She was hungry and cold, and no soul in Andernach would take her in. And when she came to the church where the great crucifix stands she saw no light in the little chapel; so she sat down outside, on a stone, at the foot of the cross, and prayed till she fell asleep. But she did not sleep long —for presently a bright light shone full in her face, and when she looked up she saw a pale man standing right before her. He was almost naked, and there was blood upon his hands and upon his side, and great tears were in his beautiful eyes, and his face was like the face of the Saviour on the cross. Not a single word did he say to her, but he looked at her compassionately and gave her a loaf of bread, and took the little babe in his arms and kissed it. Then the mother looked up at the great crucifix—but there was no image there, and

she shrieked and fell down as if she were dead. And no one would have believed her story if a woman who lived hard by had not heard the scream, and looking from the window had not seen the figure take the ladder from the wall and go up, and nail itself to the cross. Since that night, it is said, the figure has never moved again.

This is the legend of the Christ of Andernach. Surely the Supernatural and Art have become inextricably entangled.

As to the crucifix, it is but one of the rude images we see at almost every roadside on the Continent—terrible beyond expression in the grossness with which the subject is handled, yet in its rude way telling the Divine story with a certain degree of truth.

As to the legend, it is less difficult to separate the true from the false. The desolate mother, the beatific vision, these things exist not alone on the banks of the Rhine. The figure may no more come down, but the compassionate eyes that looked upon her shall so look upon others until time shall be no longer. So far the legend is true; then the lie begins. She who looking up saw no figure on the cross may have been blinded only by tears. She who from the window saw the strange sequel of the story must have been blinded by superstition.

But the legend and the crucifix together, are they not

a type of Religion and Art in their relation to each other —the glory of the right use—the shame of the abuse? By virtue of its simple record of a truth in the bowed head, the outstretched arms, the pierced side, Art became the channel of the Divine consolation, lifting the soul from earth to heaven. By virtue also of its grossness, its record only of the lesser truth, its limiting of the Divine Nature to the human, it became the foundation of a lying fable that would drag the Redeemer down from heaven to earth, and there nail Him once more upon the cross.

V.

"KISSING CARRION."

THERE remains for our consideration one more phase of the subject, namely, the use which has been made of the Supernatural in what is generally known as "Humorous Poetry."

The beautiful cosmos that we call "Art" is commensurate with the beautiful world in which we live; a world whose foundations, if not of jasper and sapphire and amethyst, are at least very broad. We have seen that it is the King's Garden—that it is peopled with the King's Children, though many of them know not that they are of royal lineage. We have seen that between them and the King Messengers still come and go. We remember that the King Himself once walked there, and although we do not see Him now, we believe that He still hears our voices when we laugh and sing as surely as when we cry to Him for help.

And we believe also that our mirth will not displease

Him. It is not for the hyena or for the baboon alone to laugh.

But in our laughter let us not be as one of these, cruel that is or foolish. Keen—as the lightning's flash; fresh—as a running brook; tender—as the kiss of a mother that wakes her child; innocent—as the love of the child who flings her arms about our neck and lays her golden tresses against our cheek. These, and a hundred words beside that tell of pure pleasure, or delicate perception, or wise satire, find their place within our paper cosmos. The Fairy Tales of Andersen and Grimm are as legitimate a Use of the Supernatural in Art as are the Divine myths of Milton or of Dante.

Nor is it the pen only, but the pencil also, that can revel in this wide range. When the right day comes round once more I would not lighten the postman's burden by the tiniest or the pinkest of Cupids that ever shot a silver arrow through a bleeding heart. Long may such supernatural wonders flourish, with no cruel committee of Academicians to intercept them on their way to the admiring eyes for which they are intended. O sweet St. Valentine—see to it that none of the rare missives committed to thy trust get lost or crushed in over-crowded post-bags. Bad Art they may be, but there clings to them that which is more precious than all the scrip of Lombard-street—that which is sweeter

than any perfume yet distilled by Rimmel—even the love of hearts which are still "as the little children."

So the Supernatural in Art has its lighter as well as its graver uses. With what exquisite taste Charles Dickens has made it the theme of his Christmas stories, "The Carol," "The Chimes," "The Haunted Man." How quickly we alternate from tears to laughter as we read of Tiny Tim, or Tettersby's Baby, or of Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas. Yet never does that pure-minded author transgress against the finer susceptibilities of our nature, or touch with irreverence that which his fellow-men hold dear. Again, what point the Supernatural suggests to the pretty libretto, where a young husband becomes jealous of the sweet girl he has married, and is tempted to go to a "wise woman" who by incantations can discover the secrets of the heart. But he must take with him some of his wife's hair. So the "rape of the lock" is effected, and with trembling heart the foolish fellow places it in the hands of the enchantress. It is all very well to laugh—but, ah! how terrible is his punishment when he learns the doom of his wedded life. She from whose lovely head that golden tress was severed is pronounced guilty of all the crimes of which woman "whose name is frailty" can be accused. Broken-hearted he returns to his now desolate home. He dare not look again on

the face that he had loved. What but the grave can hide his misery and her shame? When lo! the sequel. The hair was not his wife's at all! He had cut it from her *chignon*.*

It is not by such a Use of the Supernatural that Art can suffer. Observe how everything is made to keep its place. If we laugh, it is at that which is laughable. If we weep, it is for that which is pitiful. There are however certain minds so constituted that they seem to view everything in an inverted form. With them sweet must be made bitter—though it is gravely to be doubted whether they ever succeed in making bitter sweet. To them Art is always in hysterics—a state that is neither of laughter nor of tears, but only very painful. They may be compared to the hero of Chamisso's story—of which Thackeray has given us a lively and elegant translation:—

> There lived a Sage in days of yore,
> And he a handsome pigtail wore,
> But wondered much and sorrowed more
> Because it hung behind him.

The parallel is perfect. First wonder, and then regret

* The reader must forgive an English author the use of this word. The only equivalent for it in our insular dialect, although sanctioned by no less an authority than Dryden, is altogether wanting in the delicacy and discrimination, to say nothing of the dignity, necessary for a word that signifies so much. It is no doubt something between the *cirrus* and *caliendrum* of the Latins.

—regret that there should be such a thing as right and wrong. And so—

He mused upon this curious case,
And swore he'd change the pigtail's place,
And have it hanging at his face,
Not dangling there behind him!

Of course. But wonder and regret being of no avail, what shall he do? Then comes the expedient:—

Says he, "The mystery I've found,
"I'll turn me round!" He turned him round;
But still it hung behind him.

Then round and round, and out and in,
All day the puzzled Sage did spin;
In vain! it mattered not a pin,
The pigtail hung behind him.

And right and left, and round about,
And up and down, and in and out,
He turned—but still, the pigtail stout
Hung steadily behind him.

And though his efforts never slack,
And though he twist and twirl and tack,
Alas! still faithful to his back,
The pigtail hangs behind him.

But there the parallel ceases. The Supernatural in Art is not like the pigtail in this one particular of persistent, not to say obstinate, adherence to "place." The Artist has, therefore, the advantage over the Philosopher of being able to turn everything the wrong way—and that without the slightest difficulty—if only he will give his mind to it.

And men do give their minds to it. Not perhaps with deliberate and set purpose striving to break down the barriers between right and wrong; yet breaking them down effectively nevertheless. And it is *because* men give their minds to it, and succeed in accomplishing so much more than they intend, that it becomes necessary for us to turn for a moment from the "sweetness and light" that have been our theme, and to face the ugly question whether in much of the "humorous poetry" that is current amongst us the true limits of the Use of the Supernatural have not been seriously transgressed.

But at the outset we are met by two difficulties, differing widely in their nature and arising from very different circumstances.

The first difficulty arises from the confusion created in the mind by the volatile movements of the object to be examined. We know that there are in Nature distinctions very subtile as well as very broad, and we are accustomed to measure the glory of Art by the subtilty and breadth with which these distinctions are maintained. The painter indeed will tell us that the lines of the human face which express laughter in its wildest form express also the terrible outcry of the soul in its extreme agony. Yet we should esteem him but a sorry master of his pencil who failed to distinguish

between the face of the happy Juliet who, in answer to Romeo's pleading, laughingly replies,—

"You kiss by the book,"

and the same Juliet a little later, as she cries,—

"I will kiss thy lips;
"Haply some poison yet doth hang on them
"To make me die."

But fasten Juliet to the end of a string and twirl her round, as a child twirls a burning stick pleased to see the red fire stretch out into a wheel of light, and it will matter very little whether it be the Juliet of the first Act or of the last. Or, better still, twirl *yourself* round and round and round until Nature and Art, earth and sky, life and death, Heaven and Hell, reel together in one common vortex of confusion, and again it will matter very little whether "the pigtail hangs behind," or indeed whether you have a pigtail at all.

The second difficulty arises from the extreme differences of opinion that exist with regard to matters of taste. In music, for instance, there are those who love the bagpipes, and there are those who—to say the least of it—don't. For myself, I find it difficult to realise the feelings of the old Scotchman who said that "once he heard forty pipers playing altogether, and all different tunes, and he thought he was in heaven." Yet I would rather at any time have to listen to the forty pipers than to some of the recitations that are popular

amongst us. Exquisitely delicate as is the sense of hearing, the vibrations of rude sounds will cease at last. But who shall still the tremor of the soul when it is wantonly assailed? So long however as these differences of taste exist, the difficulty of rightly estimating the value of a work of Art remains, since that which is unpleasing to one person may legitimately give satisfaction to another.

Admitting this, and being prepared to make every allowance for these natural divergences of taste, let us approach the subject by seizing one or two of these rotary philosophers, stilling them for a moment, and examining them a little more closely. It shall be one or two only: for it is part of my design to direct attention, not to a multitude of miscellaneous examples, but rather to a few works typical of their class. We find such types in the writings of Thomas Hood, and in those of the author of the "Ingoldsby Legends."

The first of these brings us in contact with a name that we do well to honour. Was there ever a more tender, loving, generous spirit than that of Thomas Hood? If to weep with those who weep is to be tender —if to teach peace and goodwill is to be loving—if to fight always the battle of the weak against the strong is to be generous, then I have not used exaggerated words in thus claiming for Hood the affections of his readers. But the sweetness of his character—the

pathos of his graver poems—the exquisite sense of humour in his lighter verse—all these elements of beauty make me the more regret that he should not have been content to let "the pigtail hang behind him."

Apart from this blemish, his wit claims only our admiration. Nothing can be more brilliant than his antithesis, nor more finished than his versification. When the faithless Sally sees her lover carried off by a press-gang:—

> Says he, "They've only taken him
> "To the Tender-ship, you see."
> "The Tender-ship," cried Sally Brown,
> "What a hard-ship that must be!"
>
> Now Ben had sail'd to many a place
> That's underneath the world;
> But in two years the ship came home,
> And all her sails were furl'd.
>
> But when he call'd on Sally Brown,
> To see how she got on,
> He found she'd got another Ben,
> Whose Christian-name was John.
>
> "O Sally Brown, O Sally Brown,
> "How could you serve me so?
> "I've met with many a breeze before,
> "But never such a blow!"

It is inimitable, even to the last line, when Ben having died of grief—

> They went and told the sexton, and
> The sexton toll'd the bell.

Is not this enough? Might it not have ended there?

I wish it had done so, even though I should have lost this opportunity of paying a tribute to the genius of Hood—for in that case it would not have touched the question of the Use of the Supernatural in Art. But it does not end there:—

> They went and told the sexton,
> And the sexton toll'd the bell.

And still the fun goes on! The grave cannot bury it. Who are the dead that they should be regarded? what are its cerements that they should not be made dance in the wind—or the poor limbs that they should not be scattered for our amusement? And so the ghost—it is "Mary" this time—is trotted out before us:—

> I thought the last of all my cares
> Would end with my last minute;
> But tho' I went to my long home,
> I didn't stay long in it.
>
> The body-snatchers they have come,
> And made a snatch at me;
> It's very hard them kind of men
> Won't let a body be!
>
> O William dear! O William dear!
> My rest eternal ceases;
> Alas! my everlasting peace
> Is broken into pieces.

I confess it; the versification is finished; the antithesis is brilliant—but for all that it is a mad effort at the turning of the pigtail.

And not a very successful effort. You have only to

place your hand steadily and firmly on the whirligig and to still its gyrations for an instant, to perceive that the pigtail is just in its old place. For, after all that even Hood can do for it, Death is not such a very funny thing—the dissolution of the body is not strictly comical. And the license of attempts like these to make them appear so, instead of taking the sting from the one or the darkness from the other, recoils only on the false Art which cannot distinguish between things that differ.*

If however, in this light Use of the Supernatural in Art, Thomas Hood was an offender, the offence is as

* It may be interesting to some readers to compare these lines with another passage in which the same subject is treated, but from a different point of view :—

Ere the evening lamps are lighted,
And, like phantoms grim and tall,
Shadows from the fitful firelight
Dance upon the parlour wall;

Then the forms of the departed
Enter at the open door:
The beloved, the true-hearted,
Come to visit me once more.

* * * *

With a slow and noiseless footstep
Comes that messenger divine,
Takes the vacant chair beside me,
Lays her gentle hand in mine.

Three verses against three verses ; but which is the right Use of the Supernatural in Art?

nothing when compared with that of the author of the "Ingoldsby Legends." The wit of Hood is like the sparkling cascade of a fountain that has no choice but to reflect whatever light may chance to fall on it. The humour of Barham is like the stagnant pool, which, not content with the bitterness of its own waters, sends forth phosphoric flashes which are not *light*. Do I again speak too strongly? I think not. And yet to those who have not read his writings, but have heard fragments only, I cannot hope to vindicate my words. What are the "Ingoldsby Legends" but a "Newgate Calendar" in doggrel verse, written by one to whom apparently crime was the most exquisite joke of life. I say apparently, because it is not for the reviewer to touch the man who writes—but only that which he has written. At the same time the beauty of an author's personal character cannot cleanse the pages of his book from stains which his pen has left. Turn then to this book and see the use that is there made of the Supernatural.

And let us take the Legend that is perhaps the best known and most popular of them all—that of the "Jackdaw of Rheims." It is put forward as a satire on the belief in the supernatural efficacy of a priest's curse. A Cardinal at a feast loses a ring. Failing to discover the thief he resorts to a solemn act of commination. The malediction however seems to be

ineffectual, until a bird—who is the real thief—nearly dies under its withering blight. The ring is recovered, the anathema removed, and the bird restored to its pristine liveliness. This is the substance of the story. But what does it place before us, except that the curse is a thing by no means to be laughed at; that it is a grim and terrible reality—reaching even to the brute creation; and that its effects are not to be removed without the intervention once more of bell, book, and candle? Is this what the author intended? Surely the pigtail has got turned here to a vengeance.

But it is said that there is nothing wrong in all this, that it is merely blundering—just as it is a blunder to represent an Abbot sitting down to a jolly dinner in vestments peculiar to the Eucharistic sacrifice.* That is exactly my point. It *is* blundering! It is blundering when an Artist takes for his central theme that which is

* *The Abbot hath donned his mitre and ring,*
His rich dalmatic, and maniple fine;
And the choristers sing, as the lay brothers bring
To the board a magnificent turkey and chine.

There are some who may be disposed to condone such a blunder on the ground that five-and-twenty years ago an English clergyman need not have been acquainted with the usages of an alien Church. But such a plea is simply preferring the fire to the frying-pan. If the reverend author did not know the meaning of "dalmatic" and "maniple," and could not find those words in the dictionary, how came he to venture to write about them?

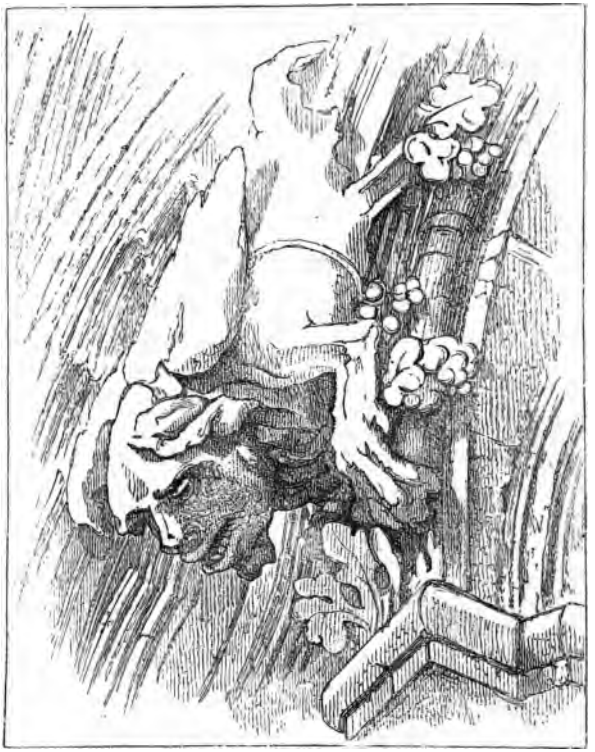
inherently ugly. It is blundering when a Poet can find no subject for his rhyme except murder, or theft, or lust, or body-snatching. It is blundering to make the burden of a song, running through fifty verses, "Bloody Jack," and to think you wash out any of its foulness by printing it fifty times in black-letter and spelling it "Bloudie Jacke," thus. But in Art such blundering is a crime. It is fouling the waters of which we should drink. It is tainting the air of which we should breathe. It is striking the sun out of the heavens and lighting us only with—pitch.

It has been urged again in defence of such writings as these, that they are not to be judged by the ordinary standards of taste, but that they should be classed with what is known in Art as the Grotesque. Such a defence however will not bear examination. It is based upon a misapprehension of the nature of the Grotesque and of its use in Art. In the first place, there are no standards in æsthetics except those of Truth and Beauty; and secondly, the Grotesque, judged by these standards, finds its true place in Art. For example, in the building of a cathedral it is necessary to provide channels for the flood of water with which a heavy or sudden rainfall will deluge the roof. These channels are made to project in such a manner that the rush of water shall be carried outwards, away

from the surface of the walls. But the architect who designs all this is not a builder only, but an artist also. Under his touch, therefore, the gargoyle, common in itself and menial in its application, is ennobled by a secondary use. It is fashioned into some shape that shall add another beauty to the fabric. Into some shape—yes, but what shape? Shall it be derived from the flora or the fauna that give their wealth of loveliness to the sculptor's work in wood and stone? There is no link of association between these and the purpose to be fulfilled. Shall men and women bend downwards with mouths agape to scatter streams of water on the incautious passers-by? Their places are within the church. Shall the angels be made to fulfil this gentle office? Rather let them with outstretched wings bear up the fretted roof of the choir, looking down with mild eyes upon the worshippers. But the fiends!—the fiends that come with the night winds, bringing with them the fury of the storm. The fiends—that clamour at the painted casements, as in the "Golden Legend," which they cannot break because the sword of Michael, with which he drave them out of heaven, flames there. The fiends—that rock the great steeple to its base, if only they may shake down the cross uplifted high in air. The fiends—who beat despairingly against the massive doors strong with a strength beyond that of oak and iron. Transmute *them* into stone. Let *them* grin

downwards on the happy throng which crowds the threshold they can never pass.

This is but one of the innumerable instances in which



the Supernatural in its most fantastic form is made subservient to Art. It should suffice, however, to vindicate the Grotesque from the aspersion that it is to be classed with vulgar or impure stories.

But it may be said that "fiends," after all that Art

can do for them, are still very far from being "things of beauty." That depends upon the point from which they are viewed. Is the hippopotamus a "thing of beauty"? As he lolls against the bars of his prison-house, with rolling eyes and huge mouth opened wide for cakes and sweetmeats, it must be admitted that his shape is not elegant, and that his countenance is not attractive. But in his right place it is a very different matter. On the broad shores of the Nile, when the landscape is shimmering under the blaze of a tropical sun; when as far as the eye can reach there is nothing but the burning stillness of the vast solitude of vegetation without life; see! that mighty rush, as Leviathan passes to the water; see! the white foam lashed to the skies, and through it the purple and gold of his harness, iridescent with light startled from its sleep upon the river. The sea-horse is himself again. Offer him a biscuit now!

It is thus with the Grotesque. The gargoyle of which I have made a sketch, if placed upon a pedestal in a drawing-room, would not add a grace to the apartment. But in its right place—high up, that is, on Amiens Cathedral, casting its deep shadow from the meridian sun or touched by the silver of the moonlight — there it is good Art, judged even by the royal standards of Truth and Beauty.

There is indeed no true Art in which Beauty and

Truth are not the theme. Evil, whether physical or moral, must be faced, because it is a sad reality, and Art has to deal with all realities—but it must be faced *as* an evil. The subject of Raphael's cartoon is not the lame man, but the lame man healed. If amongst the twelve we see the face of Judas, we see also that of the beloved disciple. And it is the same with Art in all its forms. Where there is an Iago there must be a Desdemona; where there is a Regan and a Goneril there must be a Cordelia. No great poet perhaps has revelled more freely in the use of the Grotesque than has Shakespeare; yet he has never swerved from this principle. "Scratch my head, Peaseblossom; methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender Ass, if my hair doth but tickle me I must scratch." But it is the lovely Titania that "doth stick musk roses in his sleek smooth head, and kiss his fair large ears." And again: "I have a reasonable good ear in music; let us have the tongs and the bones." But this is followed by the "still, sweet music" of the Fairy Queen.

It is so everywhere in Shakespeare; a Caliban is possible only where there is a Miranda; a Falstaff where there is a Hotspur; a Pistol where there is a Fluellen to make him eat his leek. If Christopher Sly is looking on at the players, then it is the beautiful Katharine and Bianca that move upon the stage. If

Pyramus and Thisbe and "the man with the rough cast" are for the moment actors, then it is the stately Theseus and Hypolita who sit enthroned. The element of Beauty is never absent. That which in coarser hands would be revolting is, by the fine alchemy known to the true artist only, transmuted into pure gold. It is like the drowned man in the "Tempest:"—

> Of his bones are coral made,
> Those are pearls that were his eyes;
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea change
> Into something rich and strange.

It is not a pleasant task to turn from this to the debased style once more. And yet I dare not shrink from it if I would deal honestly with the subject. With the knell of the sea-nymphs still ringing in our ears, let us take up again the "Ingoldsby Legends," and look a little farther into the stuff of which they are made. There is the rhyme of the Knight and the Lady; it is made familiar to us through public readings. The Knight is an affectionate old fool of an entomologist, whose young wife betrays him in his very presence. The old man falls into a pond and is drowned. But there is no coral made of *his* bones. After a long search the body is discovered half-devoured by certain slimy reptiles. Of these things which have eaten her husband the lady makes her supper; the

rest I decline to translate into milder terms, but give as it is written :—

The Lady Jane was tall and slim,
And Lady Jane was fair—
And she said, with a pensive air,
To Thompson, the valet, while taking away,
When supper was over, the cloth and the tray,—
"Eels a many
"I've ate ; but any
"So good ne'er tasted before !—
"They're a fish, too, of which I'm remarkably fond—
"Go, pop Sir Thomas again in the pond—
"Poor dear ! HE'LL CATCH US SOME MORE ! !"

The pen that wrote this is not fit to trace the lineaments of the human soul. I would not trust it to record the life of my dog—the poor brute would be slandered. How then shall it dare to scribble of that which is beyond the vail !

There was a Dutch painter who is remembered by the name of hell-fire Breughel, because he loved to fill his landscapes with devils. But if we are to have nothing but devils, let them be like those of which we read in Shakespeare, "Black spirits and white, blue spirits and grey." In "Ingoldsby" we cannot see their colour, because they are so unclean. As to the men, they are satyrs: the women we would not acknowledge as our sisters. If there is one amongst the atrocious company that is innocent of actual crime it is because he is a fool. A rapier may reach the heart

and leave scarcely a mark on the white victim's side, but what Hood did with the keen stroke of the rapier or the delicate touch of the scalpel, "Ingoldsby" attempts with the brutal force of the bludgeon or the hammer. What wonder that his garments are so besmirched!

> How they so softly rest,
> All, all the holy dead,
> Unto whose dwelling-place
> Now doth my soul draw near!
> How they so softly rest,
> All in their silent graves.

I am not speaking from any theological sentiment. I do not so much as touch the religious element of the question. I am speaking simply as an Artist on a matter of taste. Whether it be true that "as a morning cloud they melt into the azure of the past," or whether—

> There, by the cypresses
> Softly o'ershadowed,
> Until the Angel
> Calls them they slumber—

in either case alike, it is not for Art to drag forth the poor limbs and assault the memory of the soul with foolish gibes. The Use of the Supernatural is legitimate in Art; but Art should touch nothing except to ennoble or refine. And before all things Art should not be unclean. Its pinions were not given that it might stoop to carrion, nor its eagle glance except

that it might behold the sun. Let its flight then be as that of the eagle. When the landscape lies in darkness there is still a light upon his wings. Look up, they are crimson with the glory of the sunset. But as a vulture, never! It is not for his brood to see the Invisible—his eye is upon the carcase. His wings also are red, but not with the crimson of the setting sun. Look! they are red with blood.

VI.

WITNESSING AGAIN.

AND now, before I conclude, let us look back for a moment on the ground we have already traversed. The sheet of white paper lies forgotten on the table, but the unseen words written upon it have become a living reality. The vision that filled the dull waiting-room on the threshold of my story has passed away, but in its stead we have seen many things of which it was only the type.

Lo! a field of battle; and "Black Auster" with drooping head looks wistfully into his master's face. Lo! the celestial horsemen, and the rush of the victorious host. Lo! Eurydice, as the stern god lays his hand upon her arm. And yet again behold the splendour of the heavenly legions, the Angel with the lustrous eyes casting forth quivering beams. And as these pass away still other visions crowd before our eyes. It is our mother in the first sweetness of her innocence. It is the two, driven out from Paradise,

still clinging to each other's love. It is the human soul—in its conflict with evil—in its mighty passions —in its aspirations after light—in its agony when hurled back into darkness—in its tremulous return—until Christ comes; and then, Art, which will touch all things, must lay its hand upon Him too, and nail Him to the cross again, even though itself should die in the act. For Art is a living thing, and can suffer and die —and see corruption—in its miraculous virgins and black Christs as surely as in its great goddess Diana with the ten breasts, or in its Juggernauts and Pashts of the still pagan world. And we have seen also the serener beauty of Landscape Art. The trees of the Lord which are full of sap, and the Cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted—are they not a living background for the rest? Does not the mighty roar of the waters blend its cadence with the cry that has gone up from our race since first man went forth to his labour?

But see—if there is one amongst the myths of Greece and Rome that can touch our hearts, it is because it tells the story of some human life. If with Milton and Dante we stand amidst the hierarchy of heaven and are not satisfied, it is because this story of human life is missing. If we strike back the hand that would violate the sanctuary of the grave, it is because the dead have lived and the living have yet to die. If in Art we dare to approach the Divine Being, it is only because He Himself was

pleased to partake with us of this same human life, and in doing so gave us the right to look upon His face.

And this life—like the sheet of white paper pinned against the wall—Art is for ever holding before our eyes. Are we so blind that we cannot read what is there written? Seeing the Invisible—faith in the unseen world—what is life without it? And Art—can Art so much as exist without it? It is to the poet what light is to the painter, what ideal beauty is to the sculptor. It grows upon us as the stars grow in the evening sky. We see it in the fairy tales told us when we were children, that made our hearts beat faster and our tiny hands clasp our mother's the more closely as at night we climbed the broad stairs to our bed. We see it in the tales of romance and chivalry that we read on summer holidays beneath the elm-trees by the river's side, or stealthily from books hidden under our "Delectus." We see it in the Christmas carols we have read by our own fireside, with the happy faces of our children gathered round us. And now, if we turn to our library, the same thing meets us there: Chaucer and Spenser among the earlier poets—Coleridge and Wordsworth of the Lake school—Keats and Shelley amongst the idealists—Campbell and Scott, who sing of it in ballads—Byron and Moore, whose verses are of love—and Shakespeare, whose name must stand alone because it comprehends the splendour of them all.

Then in our own time there are Tennyson and Browning. And from the West we hear the sweet voices of Longfellow and Lowell; while from the East the echoes of the Crusades, from the sunny South the songs of the Troubadours, and from the North the legends of the Minnesingers have not yet died away.

These are not mystics or religionists; for the most part they tell simply this story of human life. But observe—amongst them all there is not one who in telling it does not tell us that this life is twofold. Seeing the Invisible—faith in the unseen world—let Theology and Science answer for themselves; but it is a matter of life and death to Art. If all this life of which Art speaks so passionately is only the same as that of "Black Auster"—if our prayers are only "like the cry of the hunted hare when she feels the dogs upon her"—let us have done with all this tremor about the Past, this looking for the Future. But I am speaking only about Art. Well, then, if our faith in the spiritual life shall perish, Art shall perish also. What can Materialism do for Art? There is a passion in Art which can be kindled only by the divine flame of Love. But does "matter" love? There is a passion in Art that gives to the inanimate world life, that lifts the brute creation to our side, that raises us to God. And this, not by confounding things which differ, but by linking into one the whole creation, and giving it, and

the glory of it, to the Creator. See, with how mighty a flame this passion burns—flashing into light all the strange elements of life, material and spiritual. Again I say,—let the Laboratory and the Church answer for themselves; but there is no place for the Materialist in the Studio of the Artist, neither can he put his thesis into the Poet's verse. One indeed essayed to do so; but before the pen fell from his grasp he had written, not as a sceptic, but as a believer. It was Shelley who wrote,—

> Through wood, and stream, and field, and hill, and ocean,
> A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst;
> As it has ever done with change and motion,
> From the great-morning of the world, when first
> God dawned on Chaos.

Who shall say that Shelley wrote this in mockery?—or not rather that it is the language of one who had seen, dimly it may be, but had seen the Invisible?

Said I not rightly that Art stands like the great Angel of the Apocalypse with one foot upon the earth, one foot upon the sea, its head encircled with a rainbow, and in its hand a book in which are words written?

THE END.

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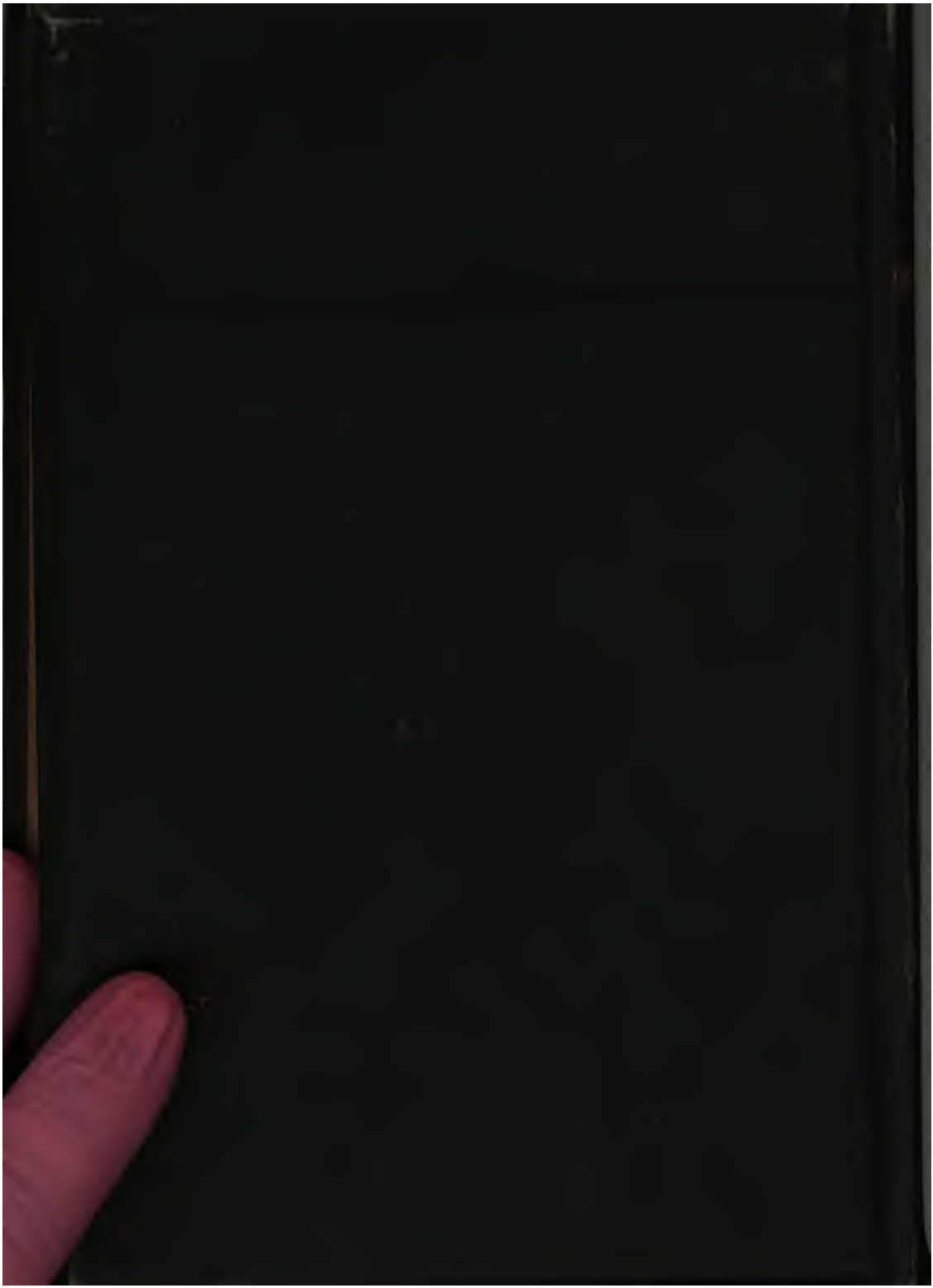
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